27030

M8 / M20 Armored Cars

Walk Around®

Jim Mesko

Squadron Signal® Publications

M8 / M20 Armored Cars

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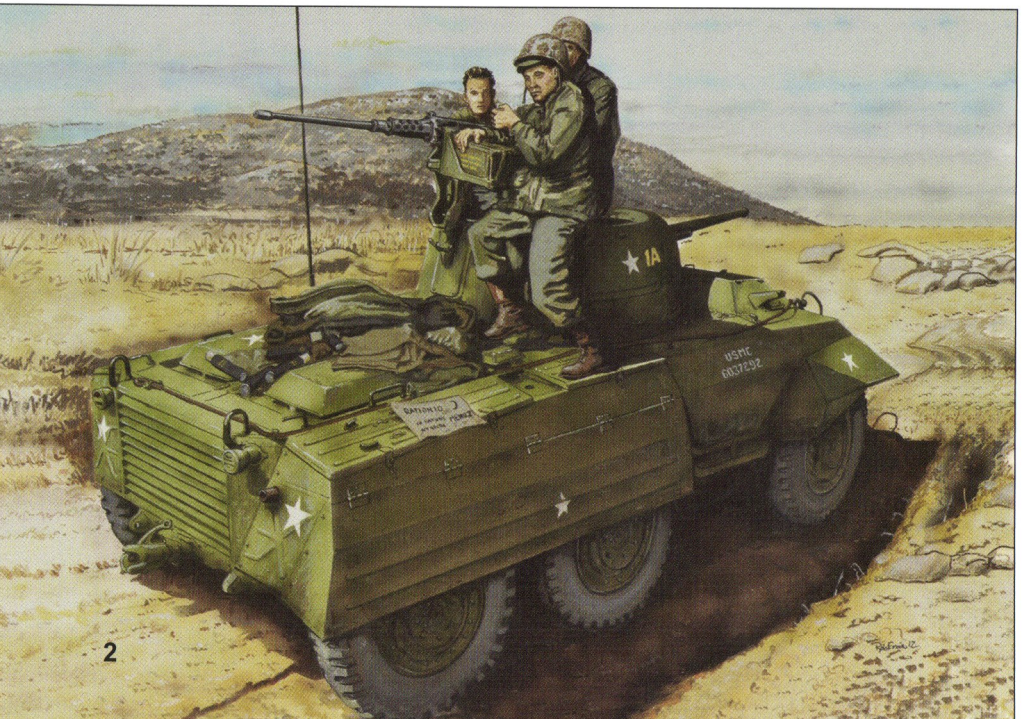
Written by Jim Mesko

Cover Art by Don Greer and Rob Ervin
Line Illustrations by Todd Sturgell

Squadron Signal® Publications

(Front Cover) M8 *Conan,* from 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Armored Division, during "OPERATION COBRA" in Normandy in the summer of 1944.

(Back Cover) M8, Amphibious Tractor Battalion, 1st Marine Division, by the Han River in Korea.



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Military/Combat Photographs and Snapshots

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(Title Page) The side skirts were made of sheet metal and offered no protection from bullets or shell fragments. They were often damaged, removed or torn off in combat. When they were off the lower silhouette of the vehicle was totally different.

Acknowledgments

A special thanks to the late Henry Venetta, and his assistant, Joe Plaisted, of the defunct World War II Vehicle and Learning Center. The staff at the Patton Museum were a great help for allowing me access to their extensive photo files. The late Richard Hunnicutt, dean of American armor, a true gentleman, gave extensively of his time and knowledge. Wayne Hlavin allowed me access and a ride in his restored M20 and photos of Joe Hathaway's restored M20. Photos and information were provided by Duane Ward, Mike Greene, Bill Klingbeil, and Steve Zaloga. A special thanks to my wife, Pat, and brother-in-law, Gary Lawrence, for their computer help.

Introduction

The M8 "Greyhound" Armored Car had the unique distinction of being the only armored car used in substantial numbers by U.S. forces in World War II. An offshoot of the design, the M-20 Armored Utility Vehicle, also saw service in a variety of capacities, particularly as a command car for high-ranking officers in forward areas. Both vehicles would go on to post-war service with American and various Allied forces around the world. A few updated versions were still in foreign service at the turn of the century.

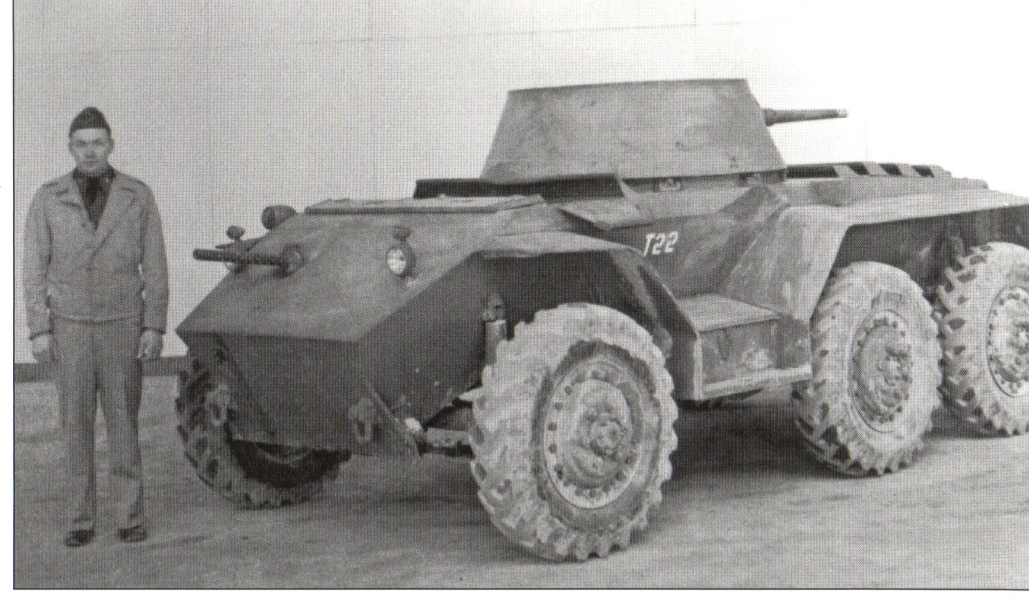
The M8 evolved out of a requirement submitted by the Tank Destroyer Command for a fast, six-wheeled light tank destroyer, mounting a 37mm cannon. Eventually three companies responded: Studebaker with the T21, Ford with the T22, and Chrysler with the T23. The vehicles were all similar in overall appearance. Completed first, the T22 was selected by the Armored Force Board in the spring of 1942. Ford won the contract due to the vehicle's performance and Ford's extensive manufacturing expertise prior to the completion of competitive testing.

By this time it was realized that the 37mm cannon was not really an effective antitank weapon. As a result, the M8 was redesignated an "armored car" and assigned to cavalry and reconnaissance units. Production went into full swing, starting in mid-1943 and eventually more than 8,600 M8 vehicles were produced. The M20 followed soon thereafter and eventually more than 3,600 of the utility vehicle were manufactured.

Both vehicles were powered the Hercules JXD in-line six-cylinder engine, which produced 110 horsepower. Commercial automotive components were used for the powertrain. The three Timken split-type axles were powered, and the suspension was the typical leaf spring type. The driver sat on the left and steered the vehicle using a steering wheel. The gear shift and transfer case were mounted between the two front-seat positions, and the driver used a clutch pedal to shift gears, as was done in an automobile. The original design had featured a hull-mounted machine gun, but this was deleted, yet no provisions were made for a second set of controls. In production vehicles this meant the co-driver had no real driving responsibility unless the driver was wounded or killed.

The M8 featured an open-top turret, mounting an M6 37mm cannon with a co-axial-mounted Browning .30-caliber air-cooled machine gun on the right side. The gunner sat on the left while the commander sat on the right. The gunner was responsible for acquiring the target while the commander acted as loader. Both the cannon and the machine gun could be fired using foot pedals on the turret ring. All the crew were connected via an intercom system.

The M8 often was fitted with a ring-mounted Browning .50-caliber machine gun. Originally based on the M32 ring mount, this mount was later changed to the stronger M49C. At the time, a lightweight folding mount, the D67511, was under development but did not go into production until mid-1944. As a result, a variety of field modifications similar to the M49C were fitted to the M-8.



The M8 Armored Car resulted from an earlier requirement for mobile 37mm anti-tank gun requested by the Tank Destroyer Command. Studebaker, Chrysler, and Ford submitted designs and the Army selected Ford's T22. The T22 featured a hull-mounted machine gun in addition to the 37mm cannon. (PAM)

The M20 did away with the turret and featured an open-topped parapet with a machine-gun ring mounting a .50-caliber machine gun. When used for a command car, it had a folding map board and could be fitted with a variety of radios. Basically it was configured as needed for whatever mission it was to perform. This arrangement determined the crew size, which varied, depending on the intended mission. The vehicle also included small wooden seats for additional crewmen.

Both the M8 and M20 saw extensive service with U.S. forces, as well as British, French, and Brazilian units in Europe during World War II. The vehicles also saw some service in the Pacific. Both vehicles were used in Korea and Indochina after World War II. They were also extensively exported to American allies and to various other countries as part of the Military Assistance Program sponsored by the United States.

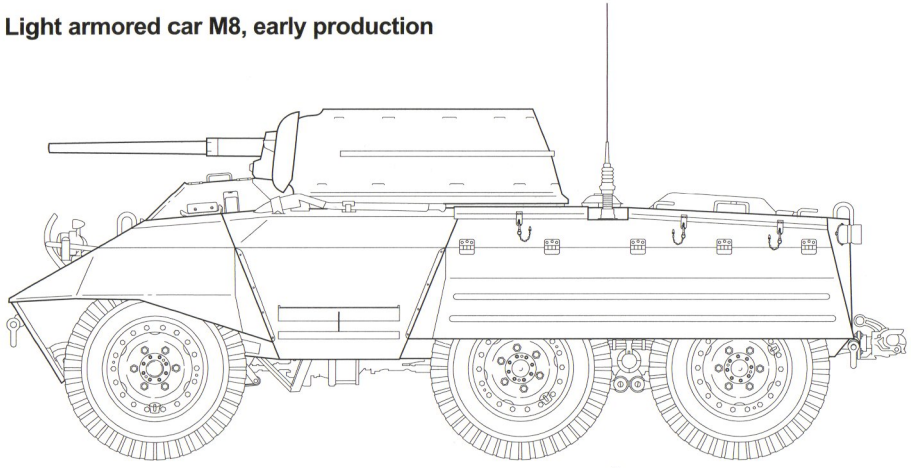
The M8/M20 continued to serve with armies around the world in relatively minor conflicts. As age caught up with vehicle there were several attempts to upgrade the armament and the engine. The U.S. firm NAPCO marketed a Detroit Diesel engine and Allison transmission upgrade. These were supplied to nearly a dozen South and Central American and African countries. Colombia modified several of its M20s to carry the Maxson M45 Quad .50-caliber machine gun mount as a fire-support vehicle.

Some vehicles were given to local and state police agencies for use by tactical forces but these have now been replaced by V-100 armored cars, M-113 APCs, and other tactical vehicles. Today many M8s and M20s are now in the hands of private collectors.

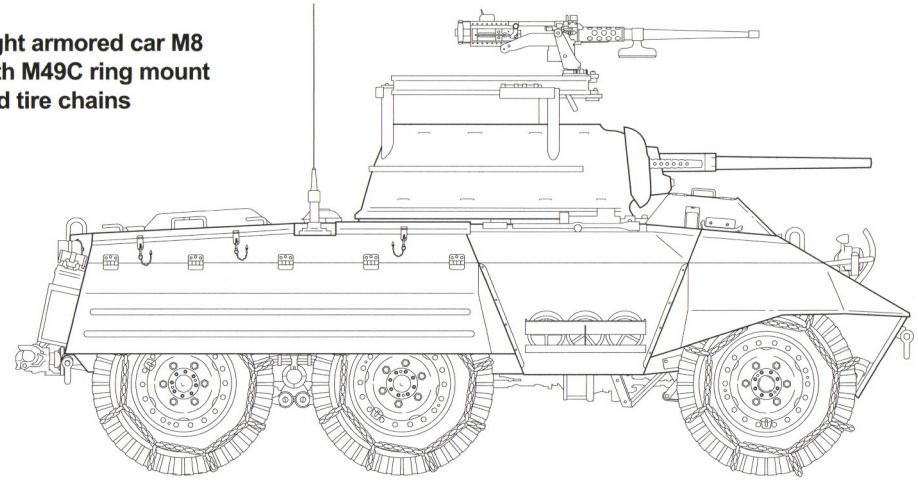
Dedication

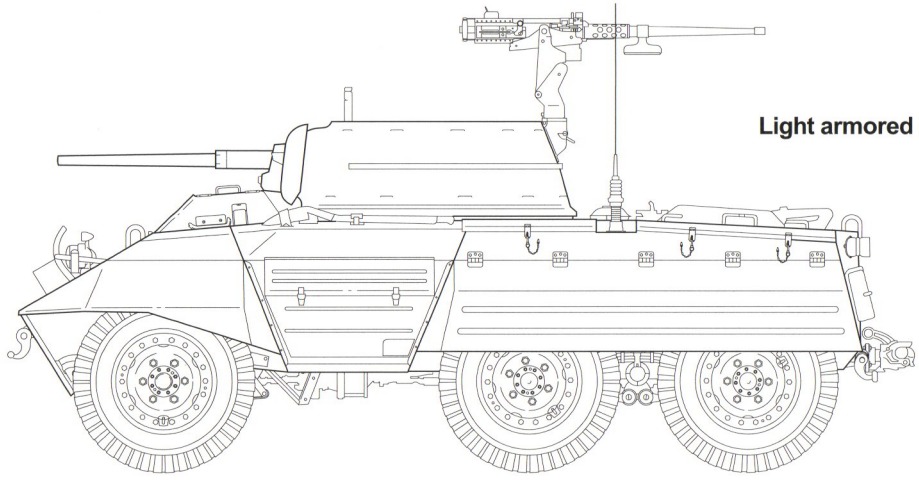
This book is dedicated to my late parents, Peter and Stella Mesko. Their love and support were always there, and a day doesn't go by that I don't miss them. God bless you and rest in peace Mom and Dad.

Light armored car M8, early production

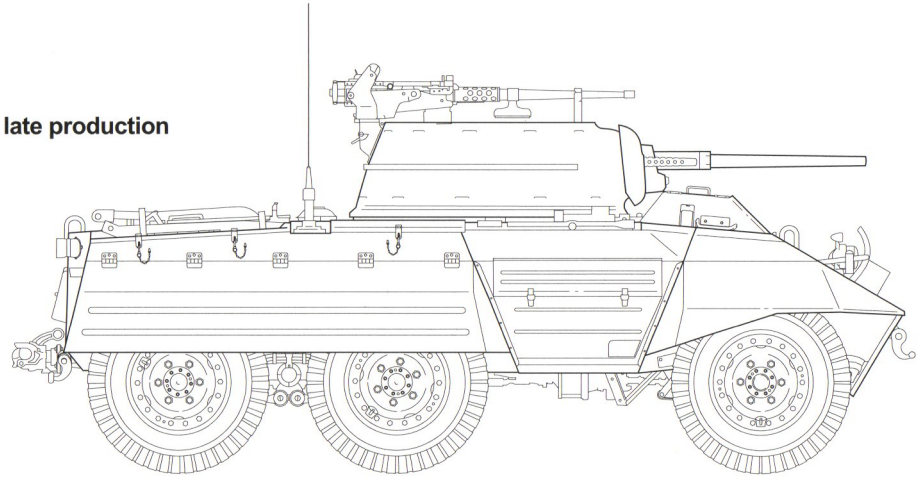


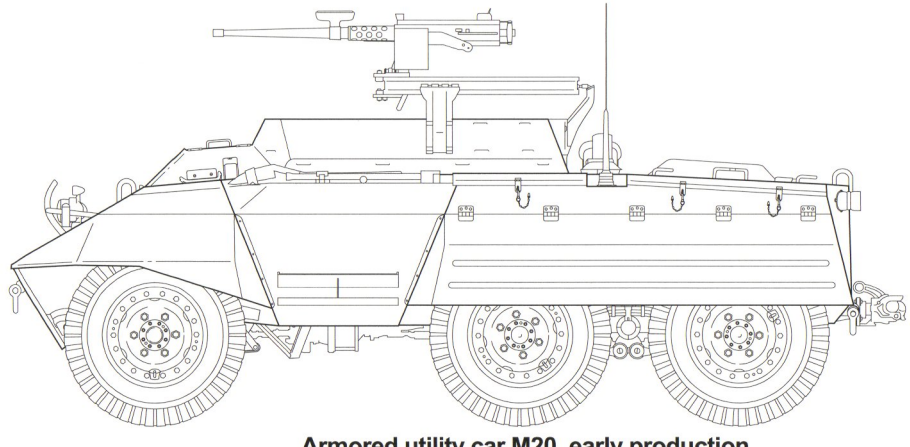
Light armored car M8
with M49C ring mount
and tire chains



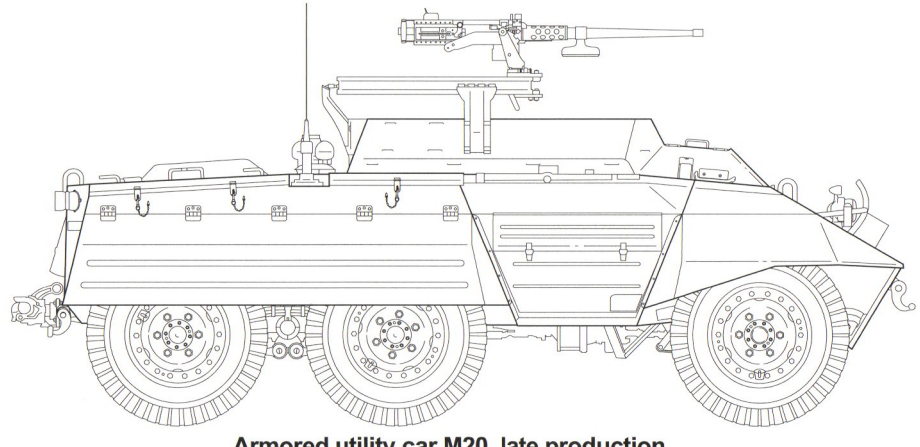


Light armored car M8, late production





Armored utility car M20, early production

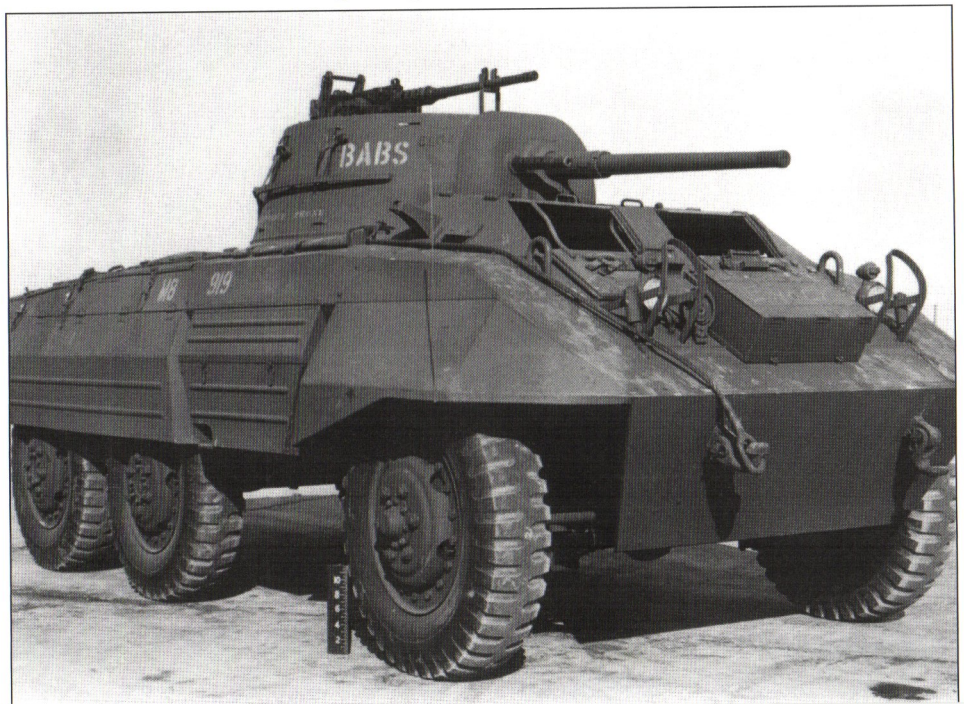


Armored utility car M20, late production

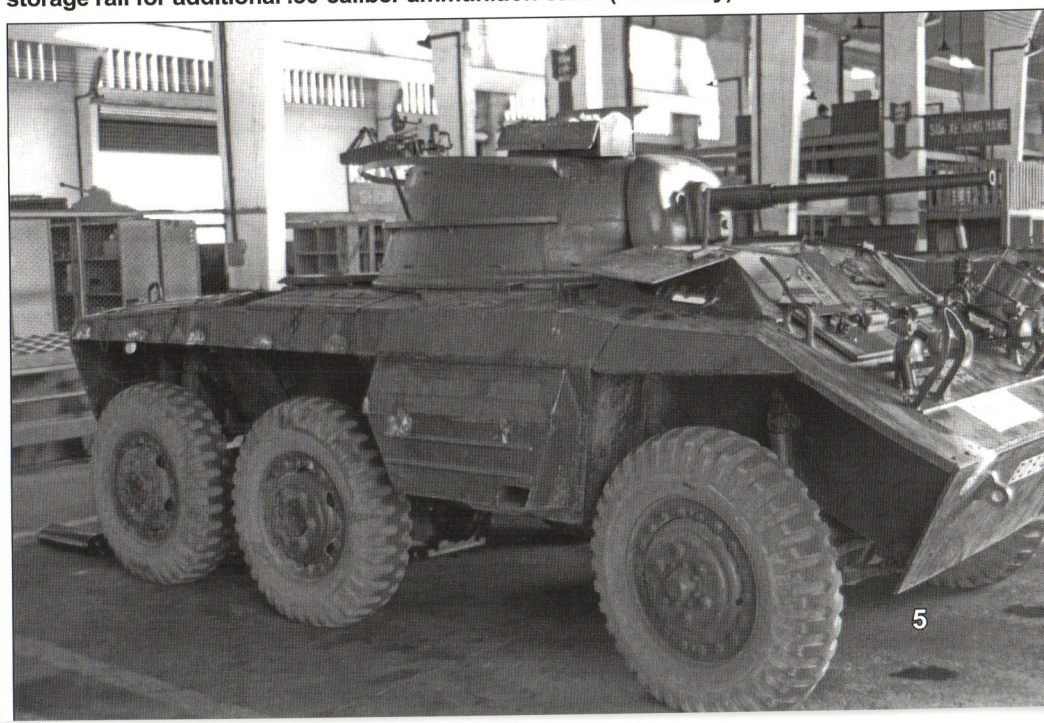
The T22 was revised and modified into the T22E2. The hull machine gun was eliminated and the hull featured some characteristics of the Studebaker T21. Side skirts of sheet metal and a mine rack were also added. (PAM)

The first M8, completed in March 1943, differs little from the T22E2. The final machine-gun configuration for the turret machine-gun arrangement has been determined. Both .50- and .30-caliber guns are mounted on this first production model. (PAM)

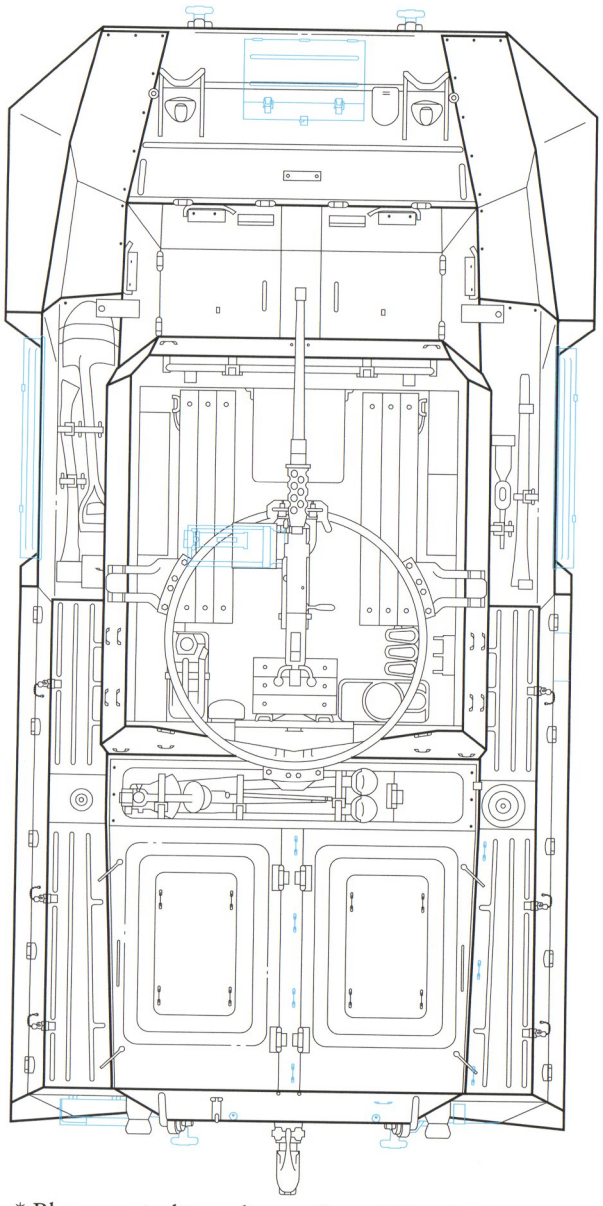
The final production model of the M8 features side panniers in place of the original mine rack. Some crews had feared that the mines in the racks might be detonated by small-arms fire. It also featured the lightweight machine gun mount on the turret. (PAM)

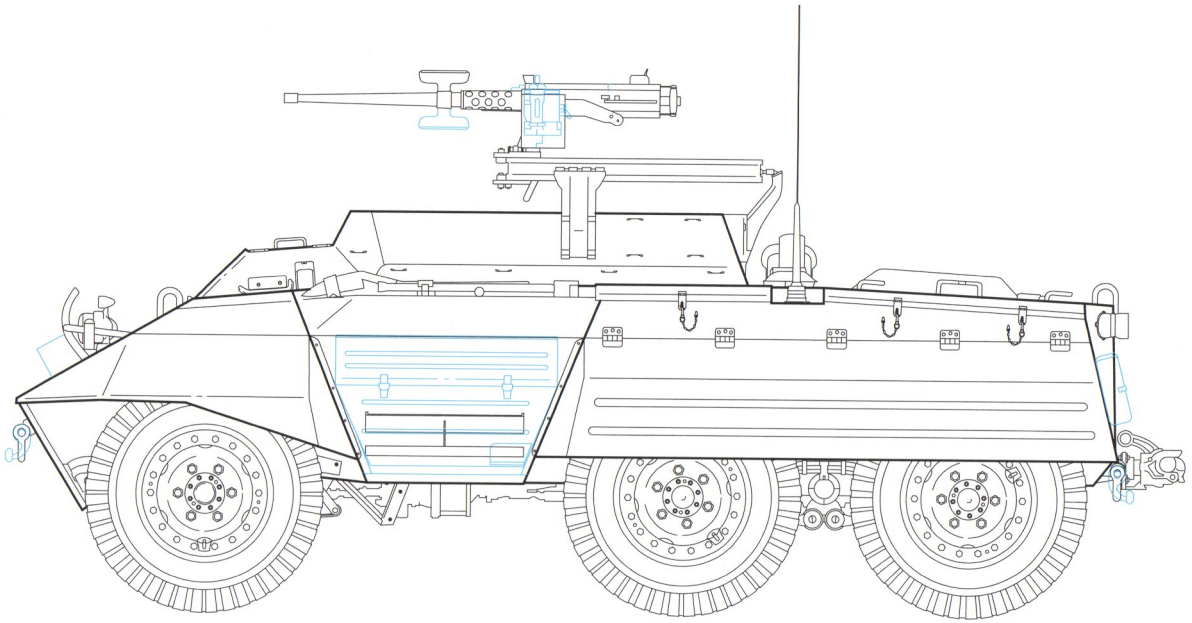


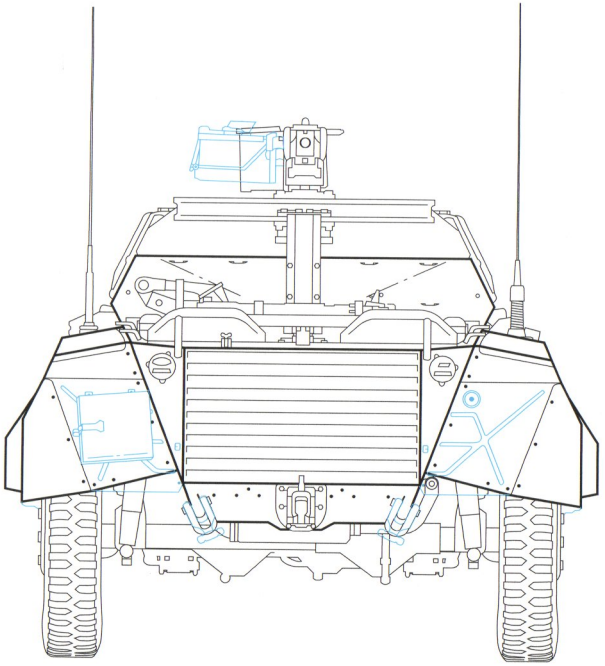
The M8 turret configuration did not change over the life of the vehicle, aside from the machine-gun mount. In Vietnam, however, ARVN M8 vehicles often received a new storage rail for additional .50-caliber ammunition cans. (U.S. Army)

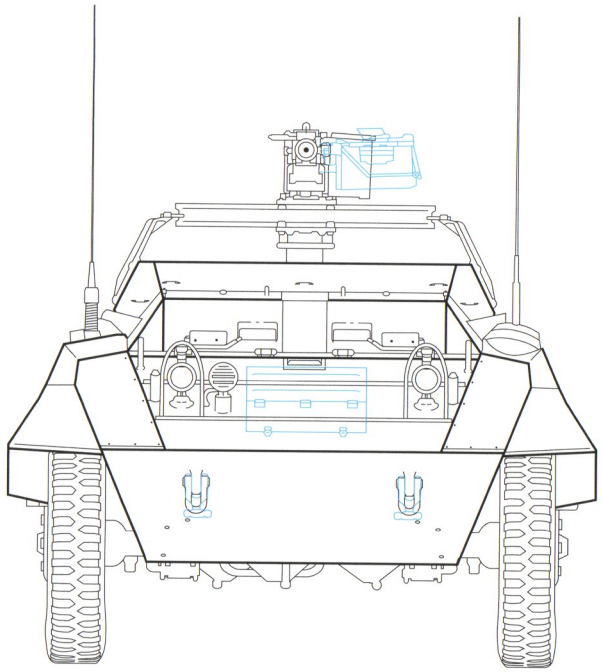


M8 and M20 Features





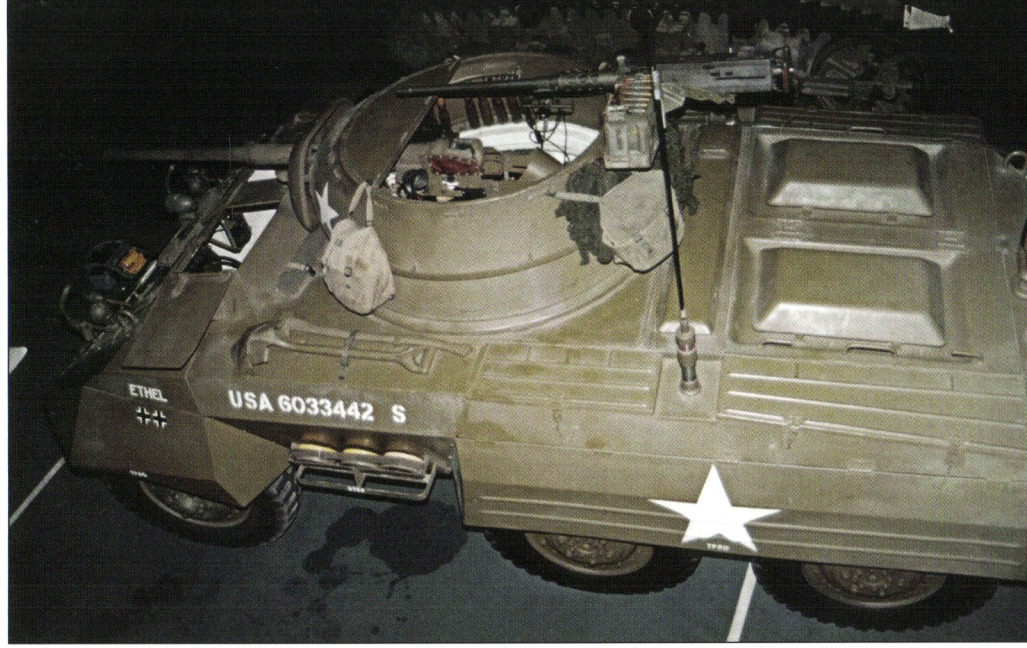




* Blue areas indicate changes from M8 to M20.

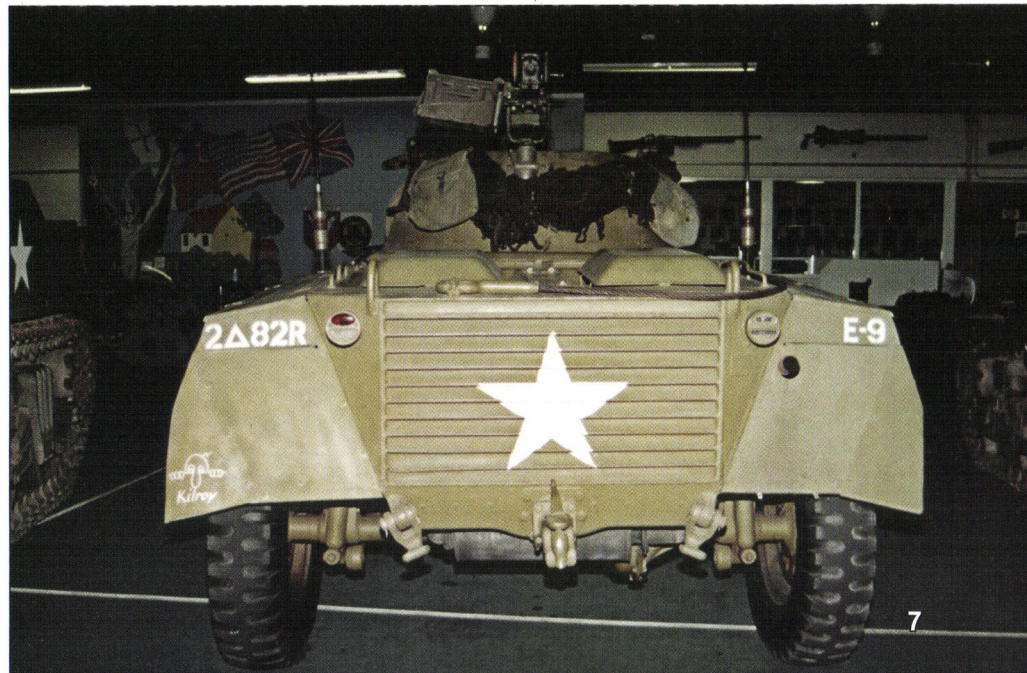
The M8 presents a relatively low profile. The crew consisted of a driver, seated on the vehicle's left side, and an assistant or co-driver who operated the hull machine gun until that weapon was deleted. Two sets of hatches opened to the front and side.

A number of radio combinations were fitted to the M8, depending on the intended mission of the vehicle. The antennas for these radios were mounted behind the turret. The long rectangular panel between them is the cover over the fuel tank.



The compact M8 accommodates a crew of four. Various machine-gun mounts were attached to the open-topped turret during the vehicle's production run and in the field.

The louvers at the end of the hull facilitate engine cooling. Behind them are the radiator and two fans. The square shapes on top of the hull are also for engine ventilation. Access to the engine was through the twin panels on which the louver covers rested. These panels raised upward toward the center line of the hull.



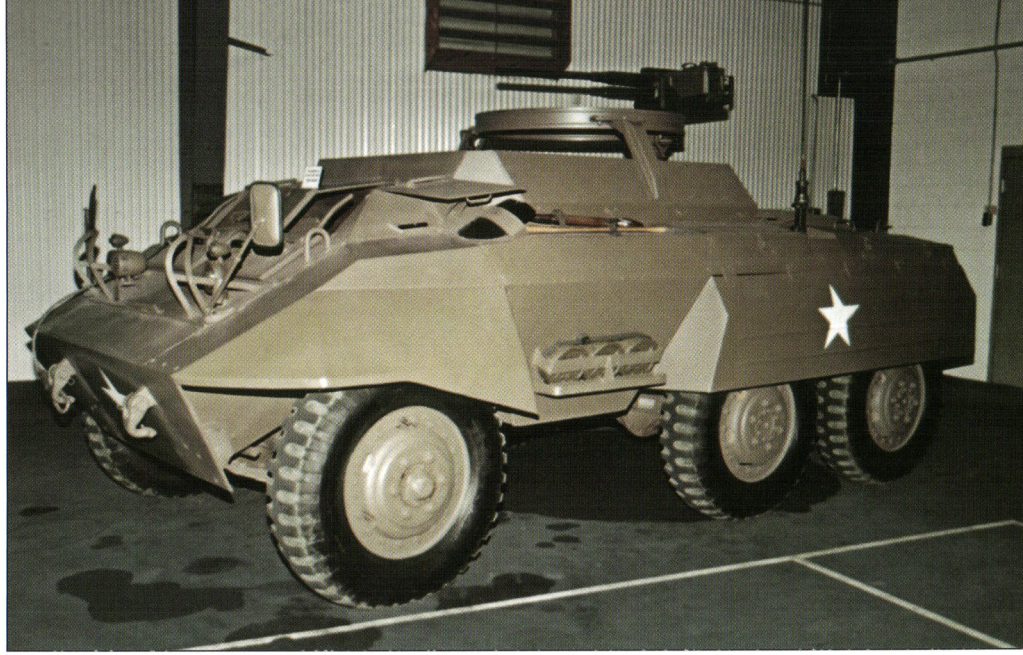
The M20 is a utility version of the M8. It evolved from the T26 and replaced the gun turret with a parapet and a machine-gun mount. The initial mount had four supports at each corner. (PAM)

The final configuration of the vehicle features an M49 ring mount attached to the parapet by three supports. This arrangement was lighter and less cumbersome than the initial version. The .50-caliber machine gun had a full 360-degree field of fire. (PAM)

Intended as an armored utility vehicle, the M20 served in a variety of roles, especially as a command vehicle. It could carry seven troops in addition to the drivers. Like the M8, the initial M20 vehicles carried a mine rack on the side. (PAM)

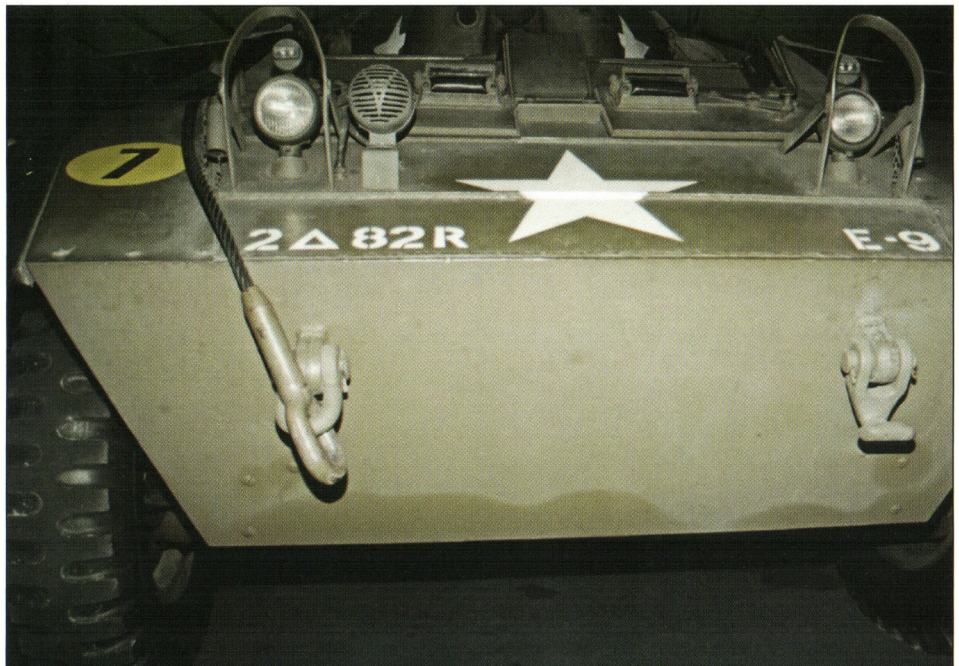
As with the M8, minor changes were made during the production run of the M20. This late production run M20 features the panniers that replaced the mine rack. In addition, a storage box has been fitted to the front hull. (PAM)

Both the M8 and M20 have a low, angular silhouette. The primary difference between the vehicles was presence of a turret on the M8 and the open topped compartment with a parapet on the M20. Otherwise, the hulls were identical.



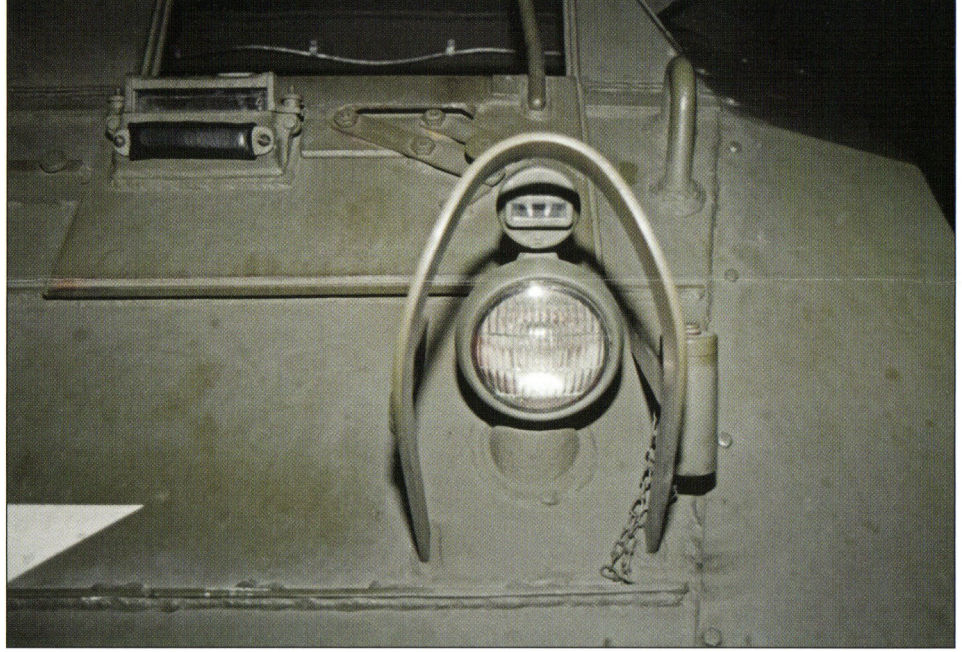
It was originally intended that the parapet would be topped by a machine-gun ring. The need for some form of self defense was evident in combat zones, where ring mounts equipped with .50-caliber machine guns were fitted to vehicles lacking them.

The armor protection was relatively thin. The lower plate was .625 inch with a slope of 30 degrees, the middle was .5 inch with a slope of 60 degrees, and the top was .75 inch with a slope of 45 degrees.



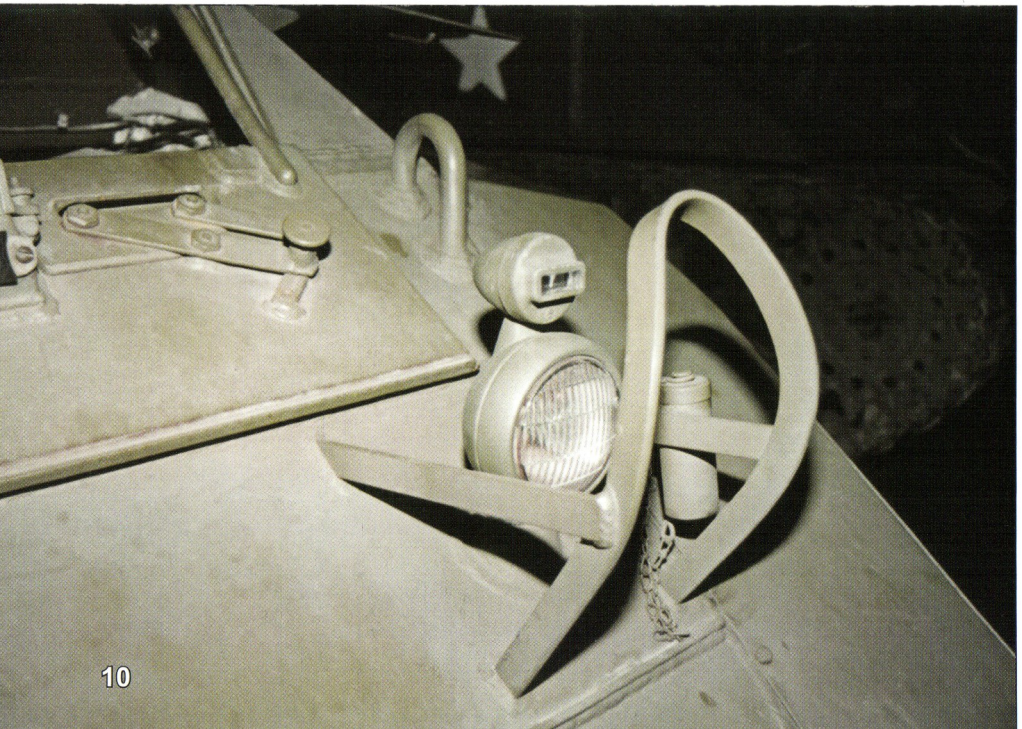
Two brackets are welded to the front lower hull. Each has a bolt to secure a towing shackle, to which a cable can be attached. The welded attachment point was extremely strong and capable of bearing the weight of the vehicle while under tow.

This "T"-shaped shackle allows the cable head to be attached around its head for towing purposes. Towing can also be used to start a vehicle.



Headlights are mounted below each driver's position. On top of the light is a blackout light.

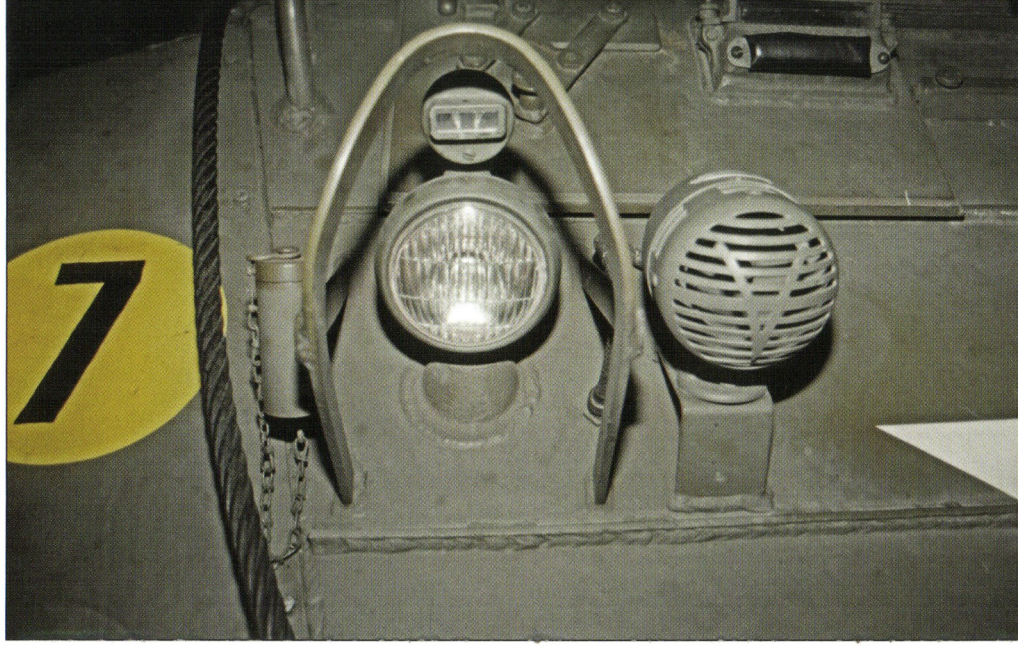
Each light is protected by a brush guard frame that is welded to the hull. These frames provide protection from brush and debris when the vehicle is on the move.



On the outside of the brush guard is the light socket plug. This can plug up the light socket hole if the light is being serviced or used in the dismounted role.

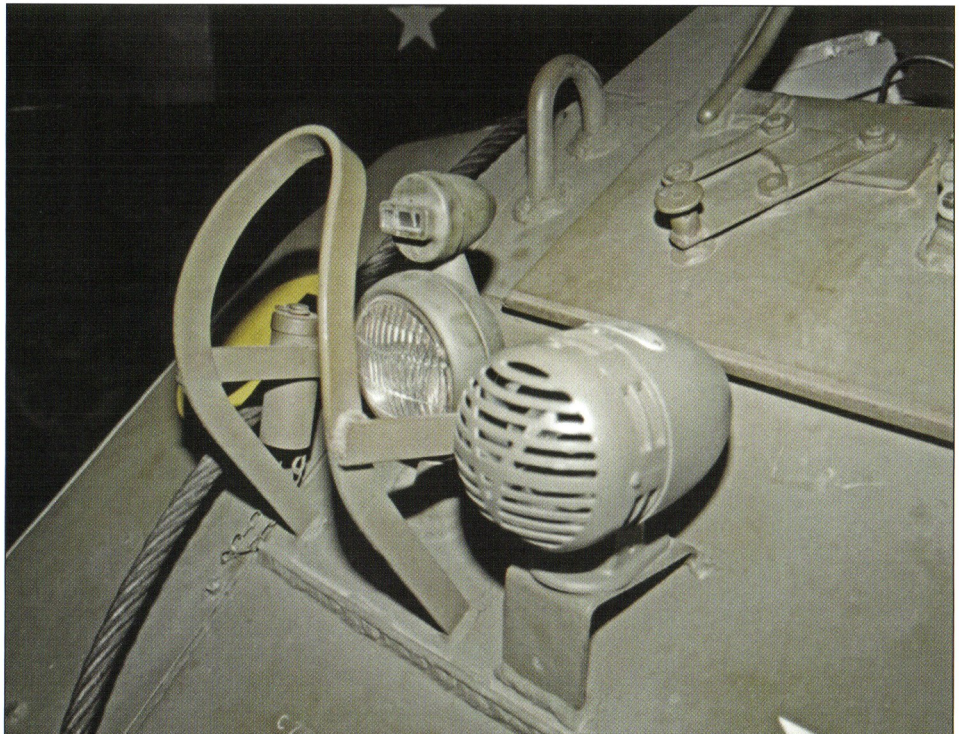
The brush guard was welded to the hull and reinforced by two braces that were welded to the guard and the hull.

The siren, mounted on a small "L"-shaped bracket welded to the hull, is electrically operated by means of a button on the lower right side of the driver's instrument panel.



The light and blackout light on the vehicle's right side mirror those on the left. To the left of the light is a siren.

A chain attached to the cap of the light-socket plug prevents the plug from becoming lost. The socket plug is welded to the side of the brush guard.



Both drivers had their own two-piece hatches. The hatches on this M20 are in the closed position. (Hathaway via Hlavin)

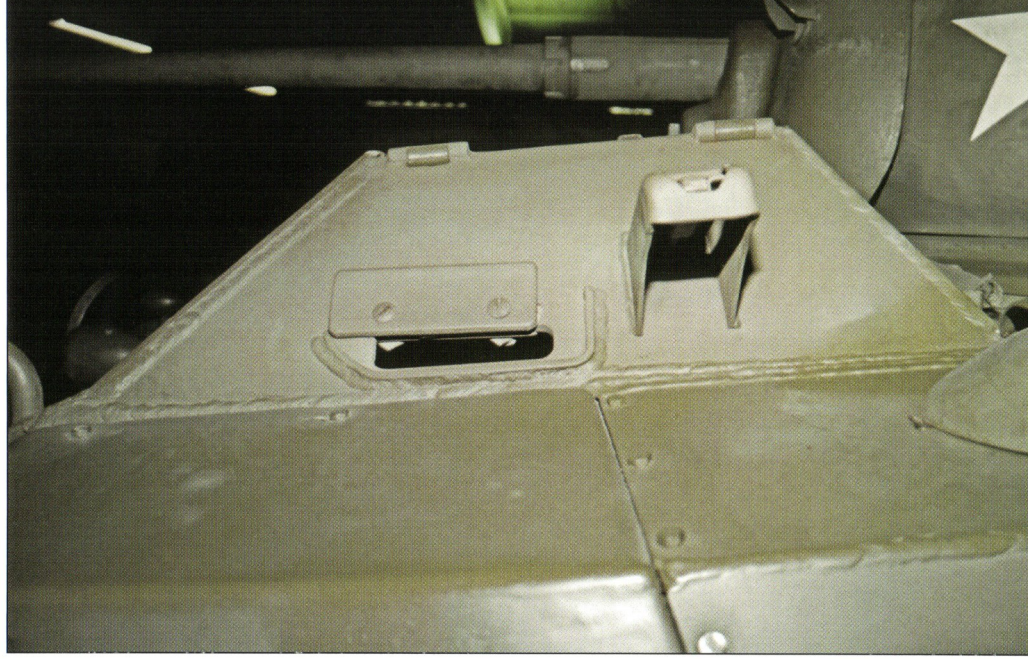
Both sets of hatches are in the open position here. The top parts of the two-part hatches swing out to the sides while the front parts open downward. The hatch arrangement was identical on both the M8 and M20.

On the exterior of each hatch is a lift ring, located on the side nearer the center of the vehicle. The small square fitting to the left of the lift ring allows the open hatch to be secured to the arm on the side of the hatch structure.

The support arm is welded to the side of the driver's superstructure. In the hole can be seen the locking device that secures the hatch when open.

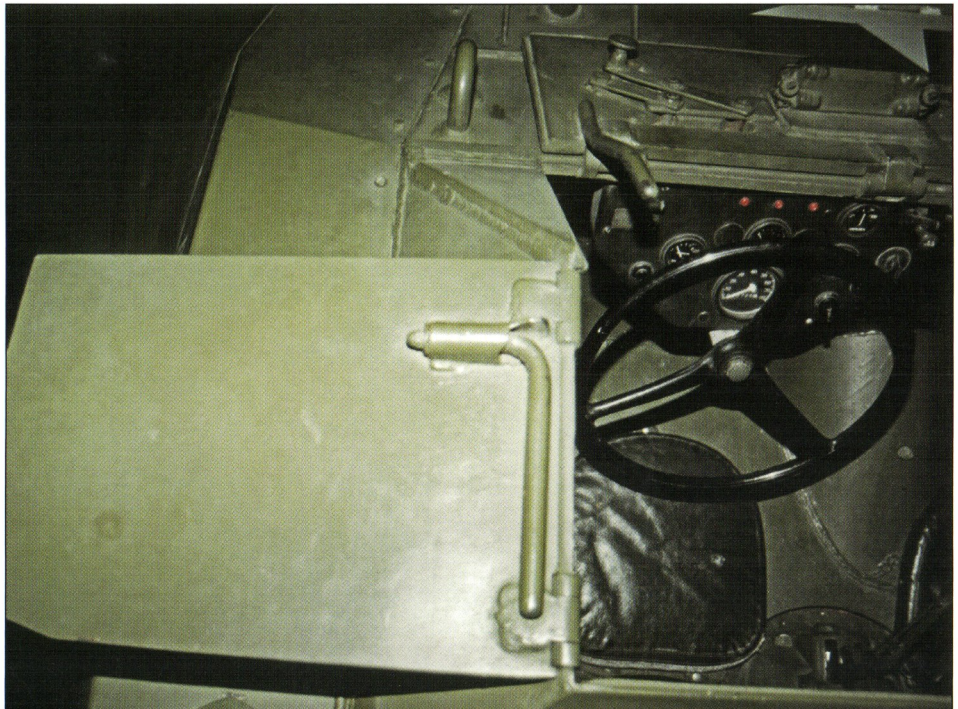
The weld that holds the supporting arm in place is fairly substantial. The head of the locking pin is barely visible in the opening.

When open, the hatch rests upon the support arm and is locked in place. The "L"-shaped arm on the right of the hatch swivels upward to allow the driver to pull the hatch closed.

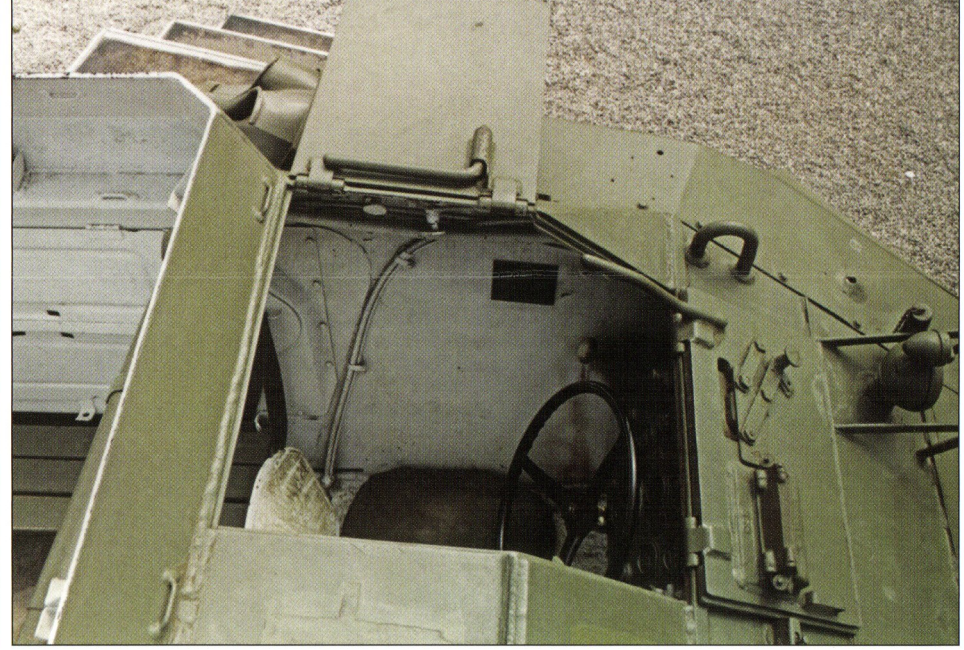


When viewed directly from the side, the open bottom of the support arm is visible. The locking pin can be released by pulling a knob inside the driver's compartment that is connected to the locking pin.

The "L"-shaped arm is shown in the upright position. In this position the driver can pull the hatch closed without unduly exposing himself.



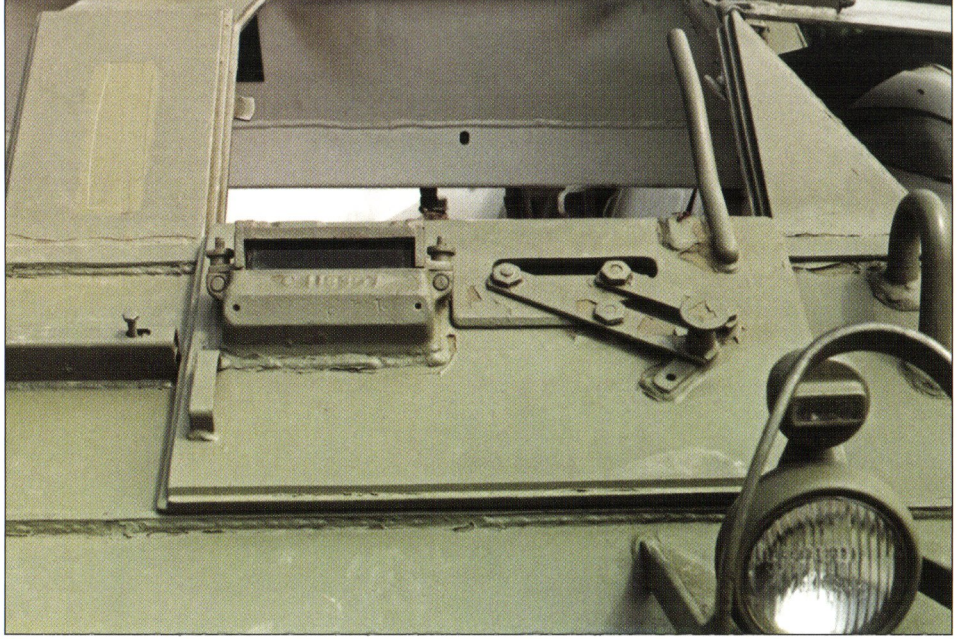
The co-driver's hatch is a mirror image of the driver's hatch. The slight angle cut on the hatch is a characteristic of the M8 hatch because of the indentation needed for the mantlet of the 37mm cannon.



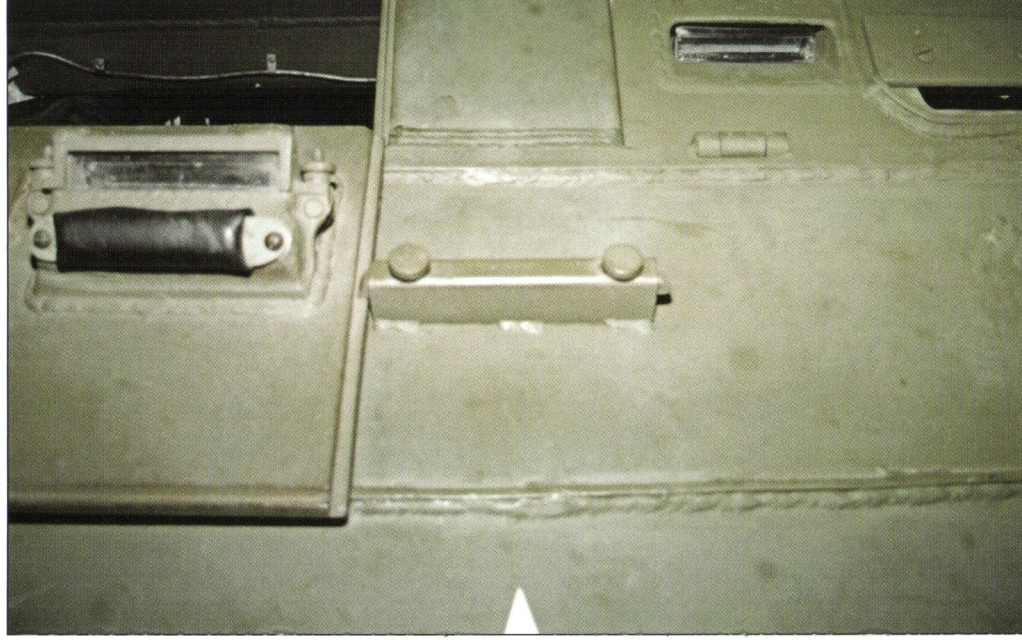
The hatch on the M20 has no indentation because of the straight construction of the parapet on that vehicle. The hatches on the M20 therefore do not have the slight angle cut on their outer edges that characterize the hatches on the M8.

The front hatches feature two vision ports. The outer one is a direct-vision slot with a shutter to close it off. The inner one is a protectoscope that can be used when the direct-vision shutters are closed.

When the top hatches are closed, the front hatches lock them in place. The top hatch can be kept in the open position when the front hatch is closed. Normally when not under enemy fire both the top and front hatch were kept open for visibility and head room.

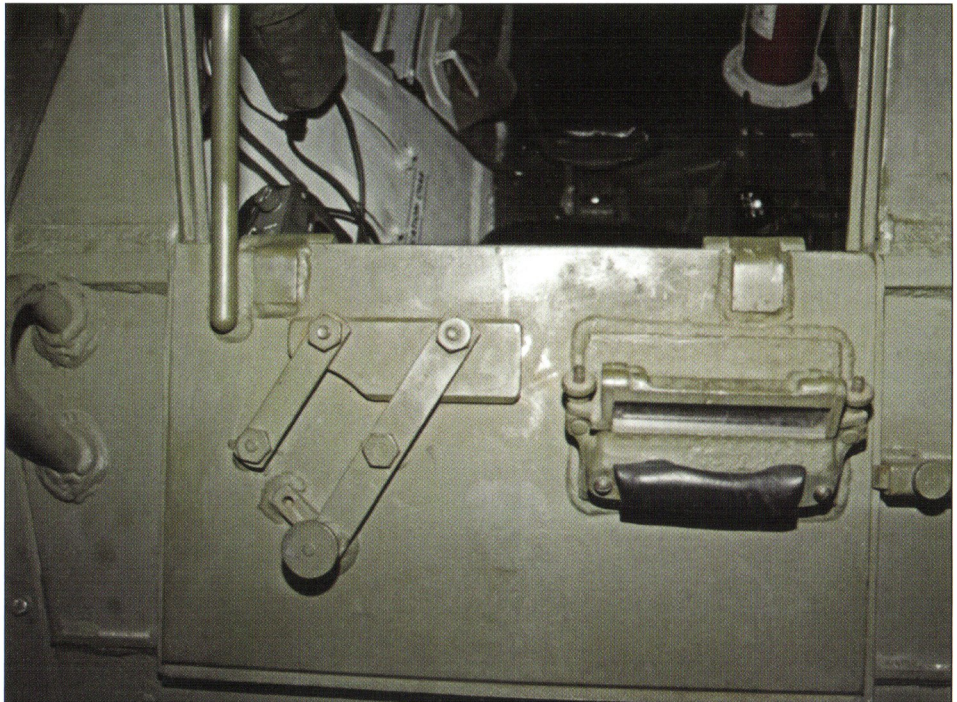


The front hatch can be opened to increase the forward vision and allow for easier access to the driver's compartment. The long handle on the right allows more leverage to be applied when pulling the hatch closed.

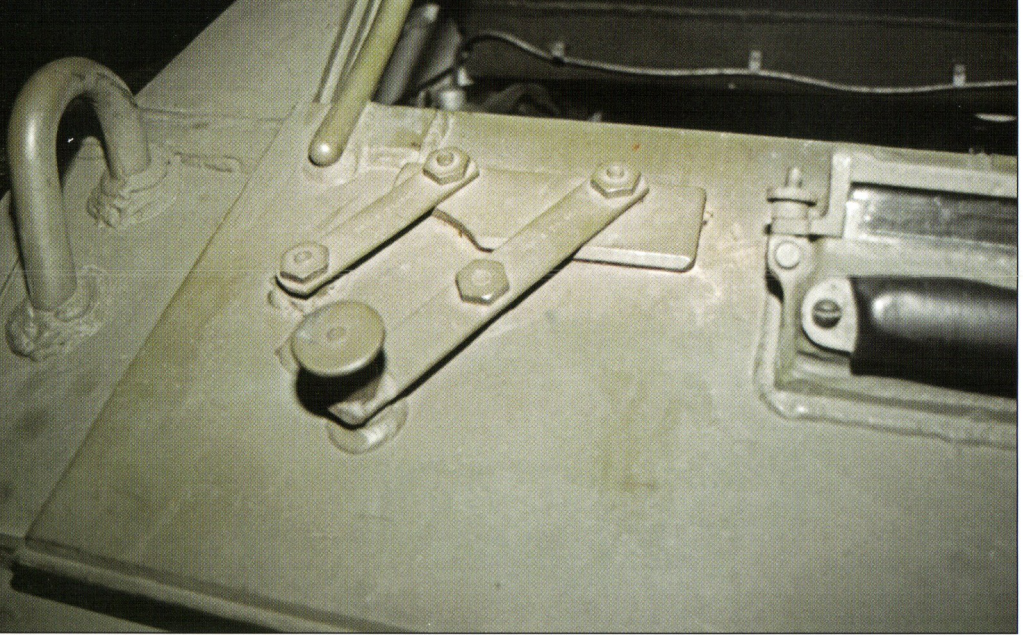


To lock the hatch down, a small spring latch is pushed back when the hatch is opened. The latch then slides back over the hatch edge to hold it in place. The small knob is pressed down to release the latch when the hatch needs to be closed.

The two front hatches mirror each other. The black object on the vision port is padding to protect the forehead of the driver when looking through the protectoscope.

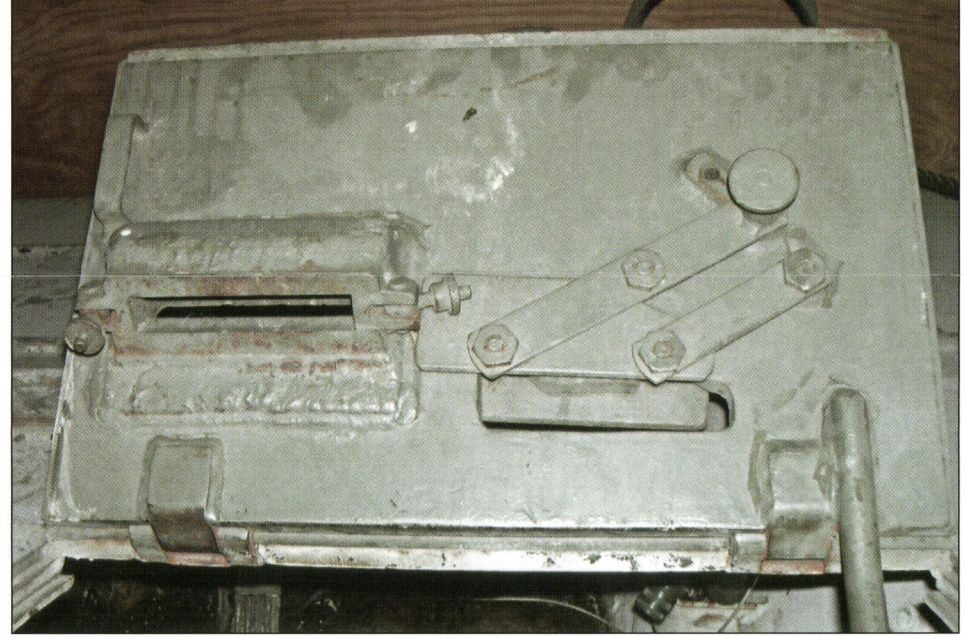


Even with the bar, the front hatch is still awkward to raise. Normally a crewman would grab hold of the hatch itself to help pull it closed.



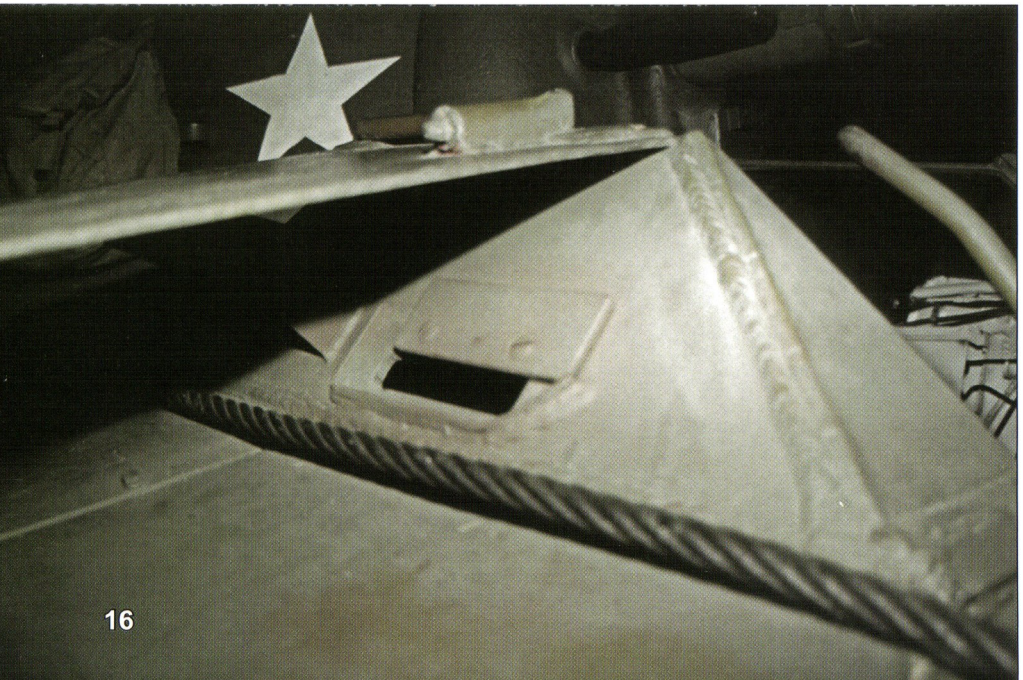
The direct-vision slot has a pivoting shutter that can be opened or closed. This allows the driver, when under fire, to close it to prevent shell fragments or bullets from coming through it.

On both sides of the driver's compartment are two more direct-vision ports for side vision. These ports also have shutters for closing them when under fire. Visibility through the direct-vision port was limited, especially if gear was tied down to the hull.



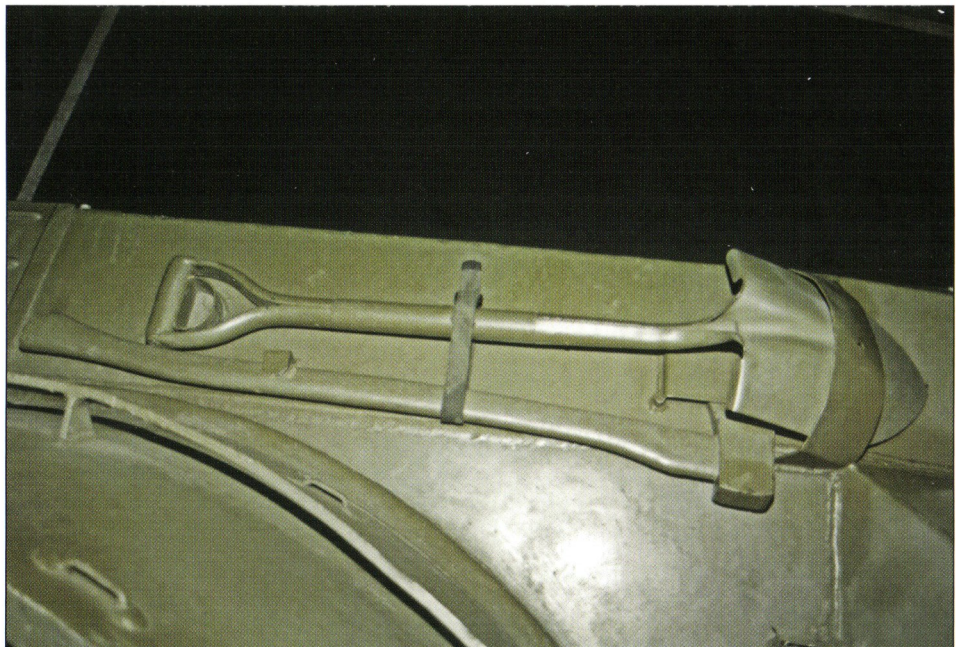
The protectoscope is removable for cleaning and replacement. The fasteners for securing it are seen here on both sides of the empty slot. The fasteners swing out to the side and then slip over the protectoscope flanges on the side where they can be tightened down.

The shutters and their operating mechanisms are identical to those on the front hatch. Next to the shutter is the pin that releases the hatch from the outside support arm.



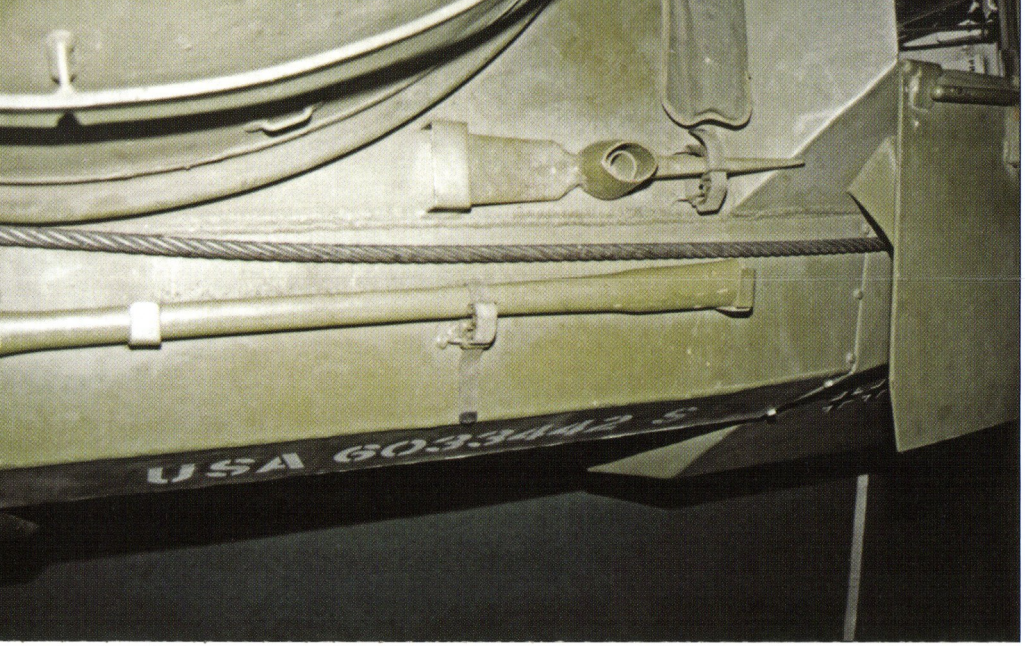
When the hatches are closed the interior of the compartment is a tight fit, even for a small soldier in the driver's compartment. The handle that helps close the top hatch can be seen hanging down in front of the shutter closing mechanism. The direct vision slot and protectoscope are on the right.

Pioneer tools are carried on the upper hull on the outside of the vehicle next to the fighting compartment. On the left side are a shovel and a four-pound axe. This is the tool arrangement for the M8.



Next to each front hatch is a lift ring. Similar lift rings were also found on the rear deck corners. These could be used to attach cables to lift the vehicle.

The tool arrangement on the M20 is the reverse of that on the M8: the shovel is located on the inside while the axe fits on the outside with its head toward the rear. Normally tool handles were painted olive drab, or occasionally left in natural wood color. They quickly became discolored by the elements and through hard use in the field. Tools were often stolen by infantry troops if the vehicle was left unattended.



On the right side of the M8 are a pick or mattock head and its handle. All the tools are held in place by brackets and secured with canvas straps on the M8.

On the M20 the pick is located further back. Both the pick head and the handle are also located further out on the hull, and their orientation is the reverse of that on the M8.

The shovel head rested in a large, curved bracket while the axe handle rested in a small "L" shaped bracket. These tools are on the M20.

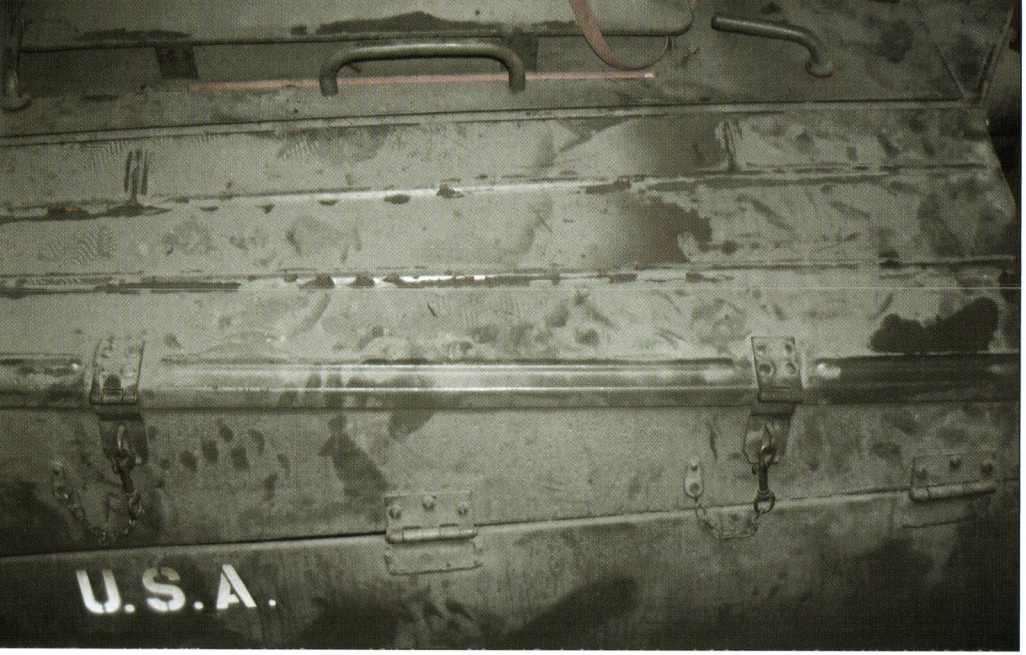
A "D"-shaped flange holds the handle of the shovel in place. A long rectangular bracket holds the axe head secure.

The pick head is also held in place by a small rectangular bracket. A smaller bracket ahead of it holds the handle in place. A canvas strap secures both the pick head and handle in position.

A rectangular bracket fits over the bottom end of the pick handle, while the bracket at the top end of the handle holds it from the side.

Both the M8 and M20 have two sets of storage bins on either side of the hull. These are located over the rear wheels. The front bin one was smaller than the rear one.

The front bin lid is held in place with a single clasp and retaining clamp. The lid was hinged to open toward the center line of the vehicle. The slight lip extending over the edge of the lid helps seal the bin and keep out rain and dirt.



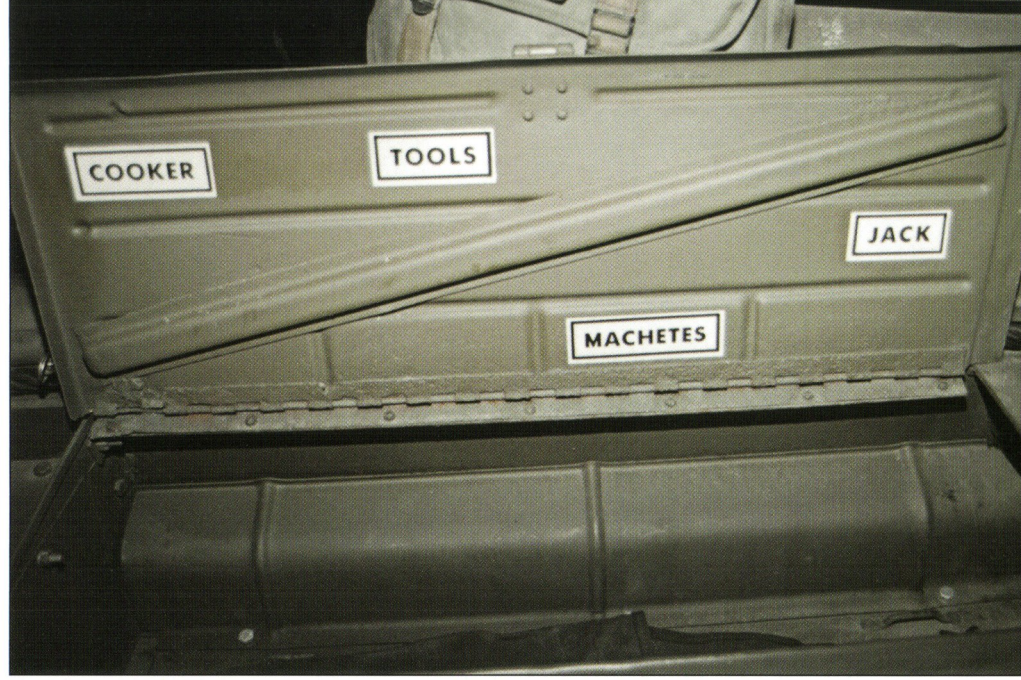
Two clasps secure the lid of the larger, rear bin. The hinges at the bottom allow the side skirts to fold upward to provide access to the tires.

The embossed outer rib on the rear lid is split in two places by latches. The rear lid also has only two smaller embossed ribs that run toward the hinge line. The thin sheet metal lids can be easily damaged or bent if not properly secured.

Embossed ribbing adds strength to both bin lids. These embossed features consist of three main ribs that run lengthwise on the lid. On the front lid, the outer one rib is split in two by its latch. Three small additional ribs run toward the hinge line.

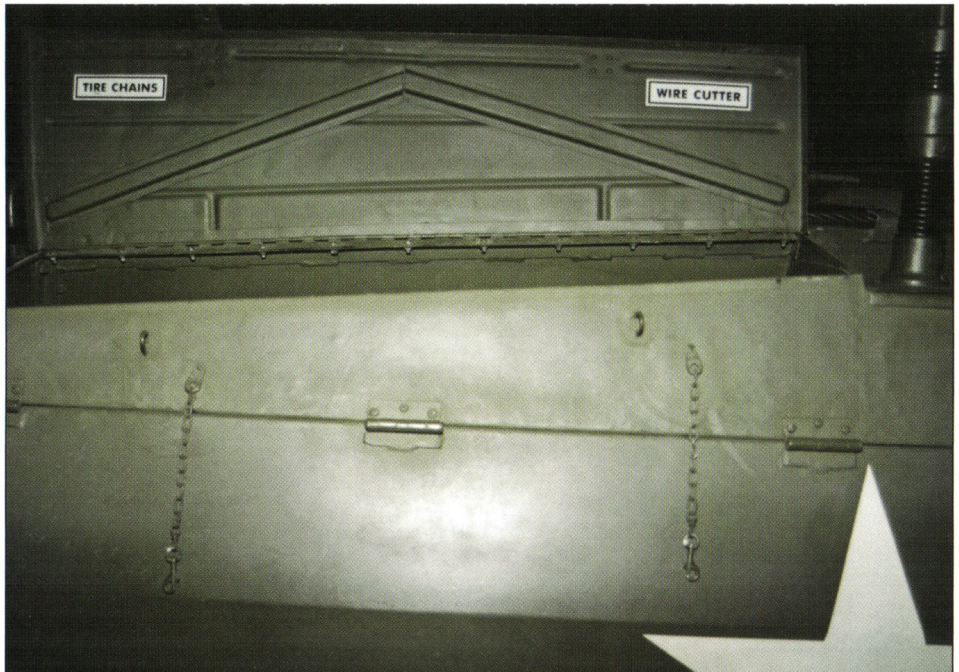
Here the latch has been lifted and the clamp has been laid in the gap between the skirt and the side of the bin.

This close-up shows the hinge and latch arrangement. The "C" clamp is attached to a small chain to prevent it from being dropped or lost when undone.

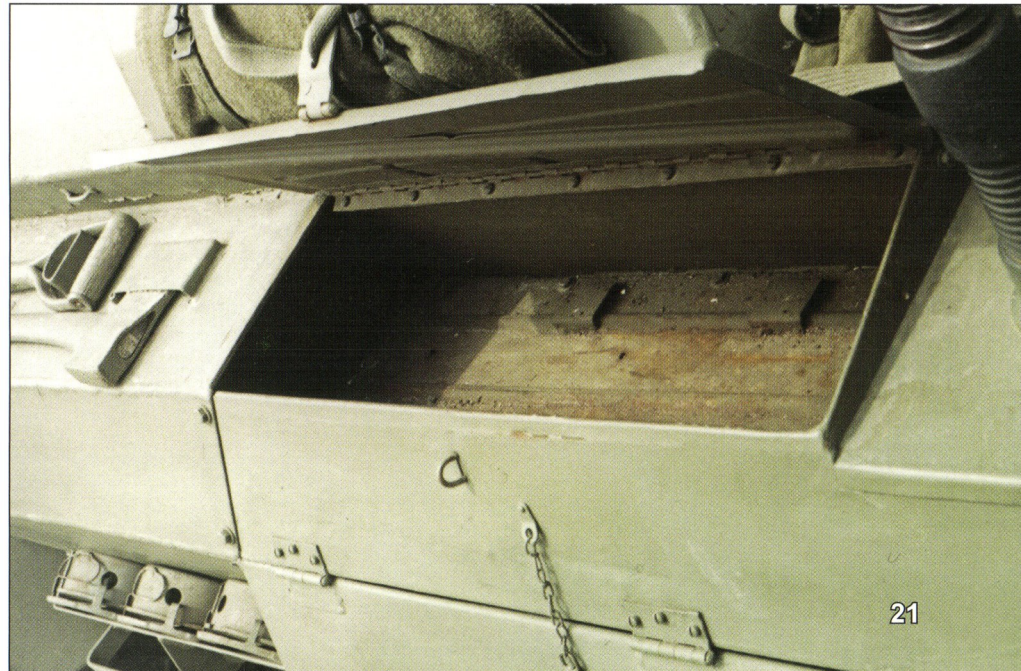


A reinforcing support runs diagonally from one corner of the front bin lid to the opposite corner. This reinforcement allows the lid to support weight without buckling.

Due to its length, the rear lid support is "V" shaped. Both lids have labels to specify what gear is to be stored in the bin. Under field conditions these labels would wear off and were often disregarded.



The front bin is located behind the tools and in front of the antenna mount. Its bottom is the fender that covers the rear wheels. The extended lip on the hatch makes a good seal, though moisture could still leak into the bin.



The rear bin runs from the antenna mount back to the rear end of the engine compartment. Made of sheet metal, the bins offer no ballistic protection.

The floor of the bin also has reinforcing indentations for support. The M8 has little internal storage space, so these bins were usually filled with standard and crew gear.

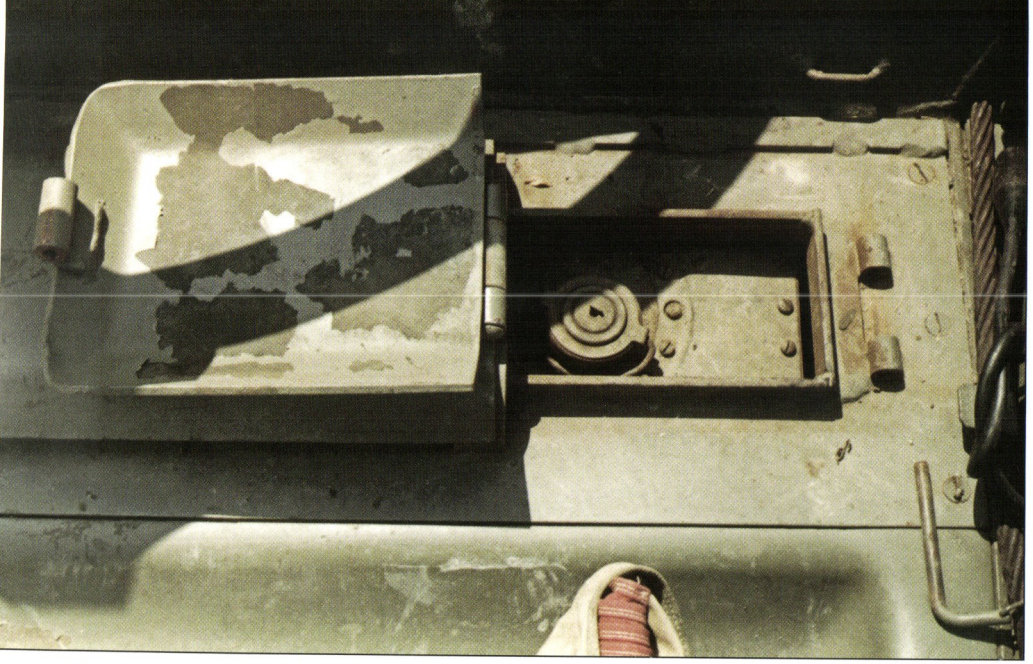
The bin floor has small tie downs welded to it. This practice seems to have been more common in the rear bins then the front ones.

The number and location of these tie downs also seems to vary from side to side. These tie downs were frequently not used, since gear was often just thrown into the bins.

There are two antennas on the fenders between the storage bins on both the M8 and M20. These were the standard type antennas and mounts used on numerous American vehicles during the war.

The antenna can be removed by loosening the nut seen at the top of the mount. Both the M8 and M20 vehicles carried extra antennas to replace those damaged or knocked off in action. The spring on the bottom gave the mount a certain degree of flexibility when the antenna brushed up against something.

The fuel tank is located in the forward part of the engine compartment behind the rear wall of the crew compartment. Over the installation is an armored fuel tank cover. The antenna mounts are located on either side of it.



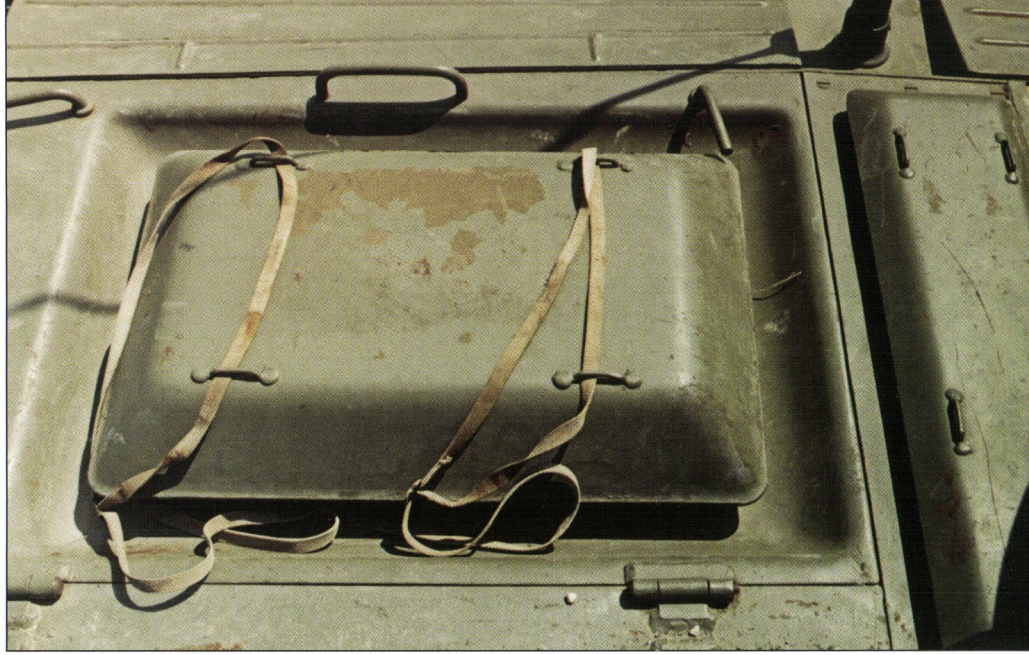
On the right side of the cover is a hinged lid that allows access to the fuel filler cap. The lid was held in place by the "L"-shaped pin in the lower right corner of the photo.

The indentation underneath the fuel tank is readily apparent here. The 54-gallon capacity of the fuel tank gave the M8/M20 a range of about 350 miles. When empty, the tank is relatively light and easy to handle and move.

The self-sealing fuel tank is made of rubber. Underneath it is an indentation that allows the tank to fit over the top of the transmission and flywheel housing. The tank spanned the width of the engine compartment.

The sides of the fuel tank are at different angles to match the sides of the engine compartment. This 60-year-old tank still holds fuel.

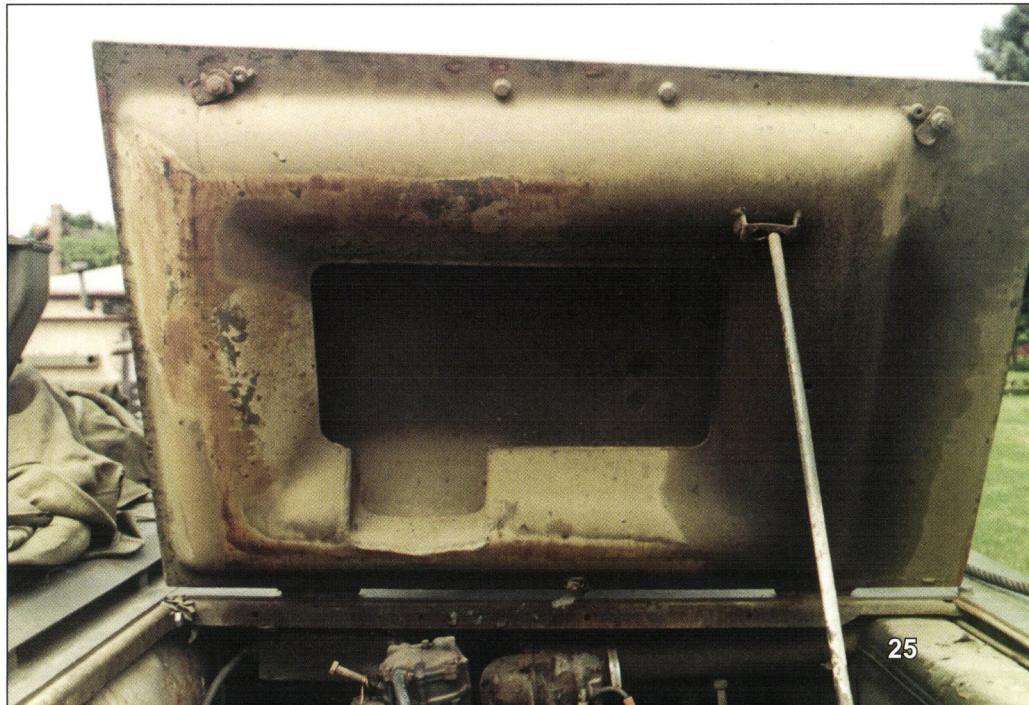
The engine deck has two ventilator hatches over the engine. The entire deck area can be removed for major engine repair or replacement. Just visible at the bottom of the photo is the armored gas tank cover.

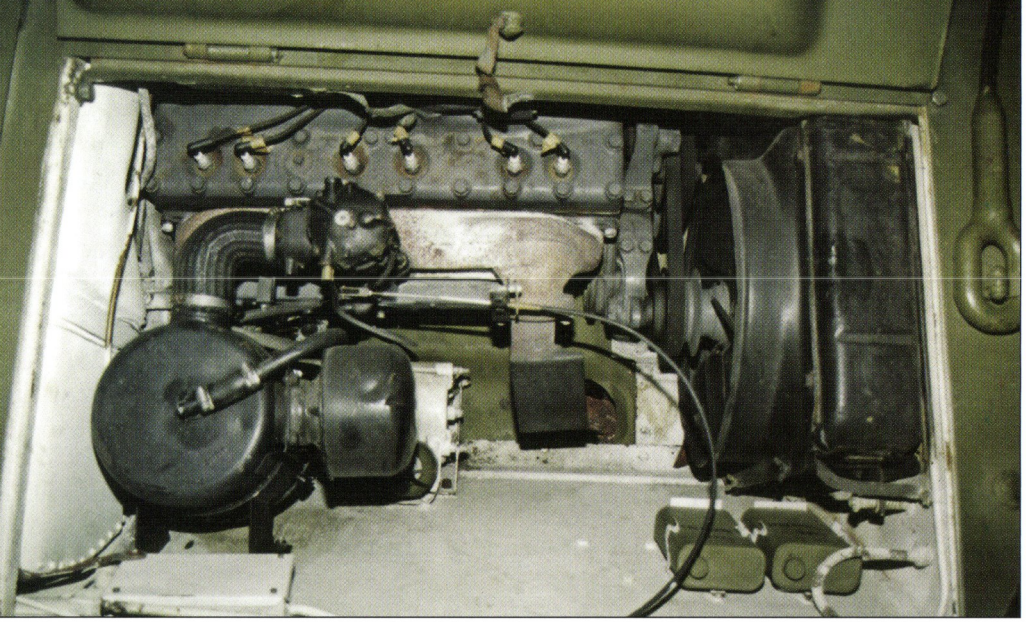


To facilitate stowage, tie downs have been welded to some of the hatches. The problematic lack of internal stowage aboard the M8/M20 forced crews to pack most of their extra gear outside the vehicle.

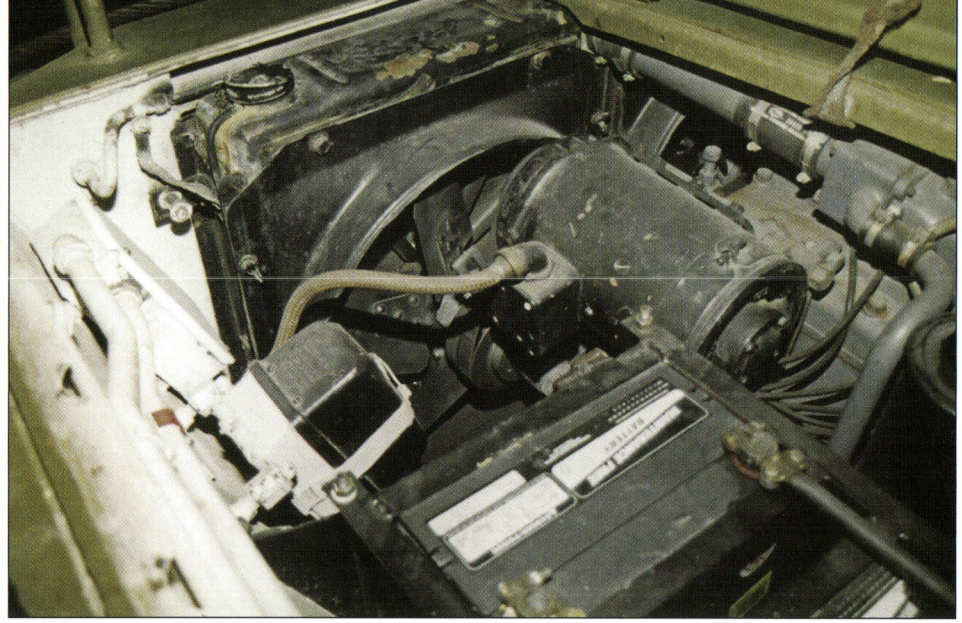
Extra gear can be strapped atop the hatches, but too much gear could block air flow through the hatches, resulting in overheated engines and serious damage.

Hatches open upward toward the centerline to allow access to the engine. A rod like that of an automobile hood holds the hatch open to facilitate engine maintenance.



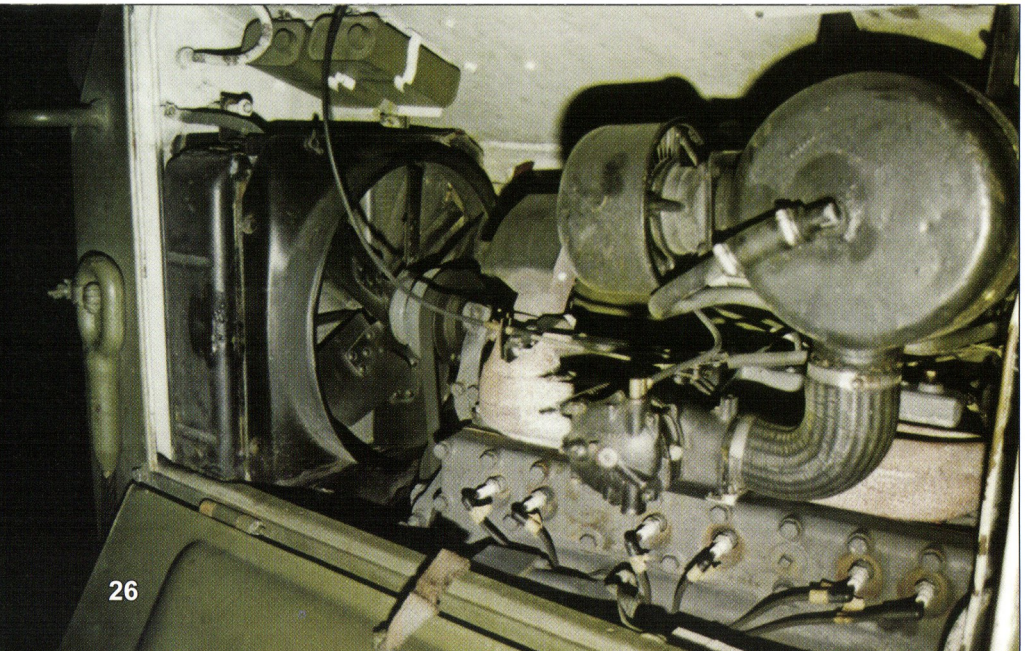


The fan, fan shroud, and radiator are to the right in this view of the left side of the engine compartment. The round object in the lower left is the air cleaner. Above it is the carburetor. Underneath the carburetor is the exhaust manifold.

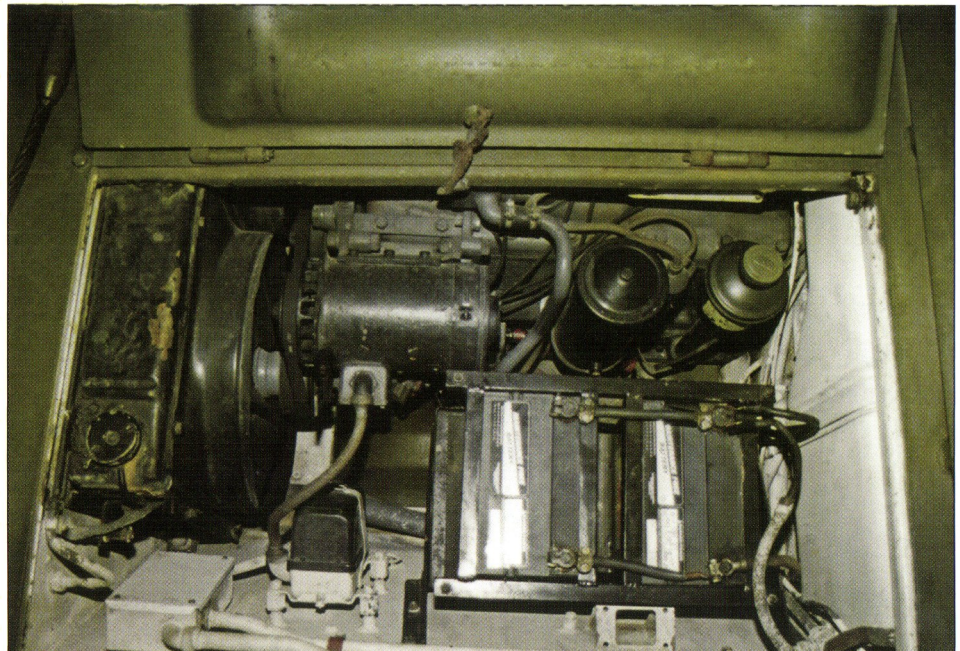


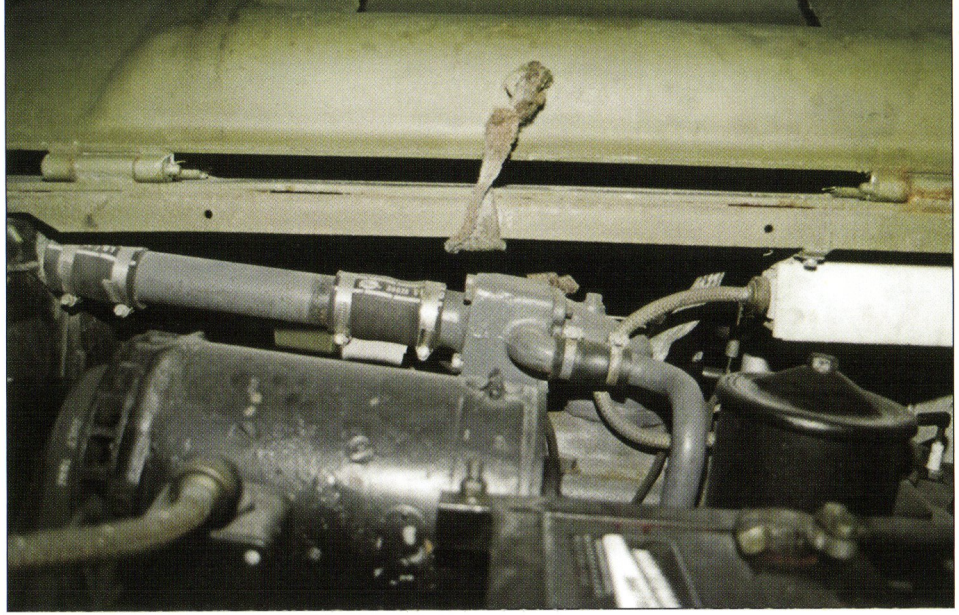
From this angle can be seen the right-hand fan, the generator, and the battery. The square object slightly to the right of the generator attached to the pipe going into the radiator is the thermostat housing.

From this angle can be seen the left hand fan and fan shroud. M8/M20 used two fans and a larger radiator as compared to the M3A1. The original spark plugs above the air cleaner were Champion J-10 automotive type. They were only to be cleaned with a sand blasting type cleaner. The fuel tank was located to the right behind the engine compartment wall.



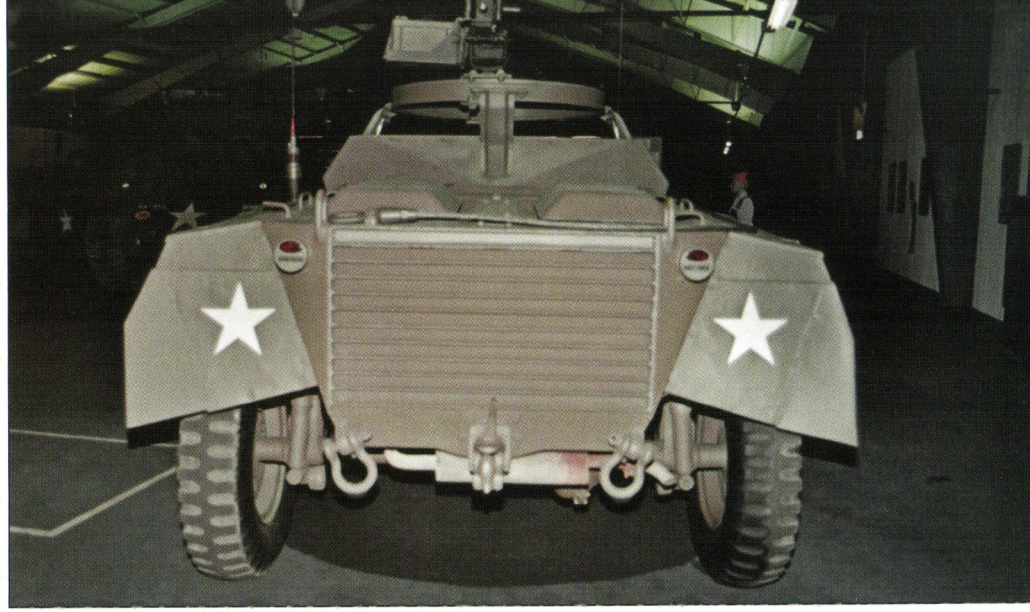
The fan, fan shroud, and radiator are to the left in this view of the right side of the engine compartment. The battery is on the lower right. Above it on the right is the oil filler cap. On the left is the oil filter. Just behind the fan is the generator. The engine compartment was painted white to help in locating various fittings and engine parts. After a short time in service it would become exceptionally dirty.





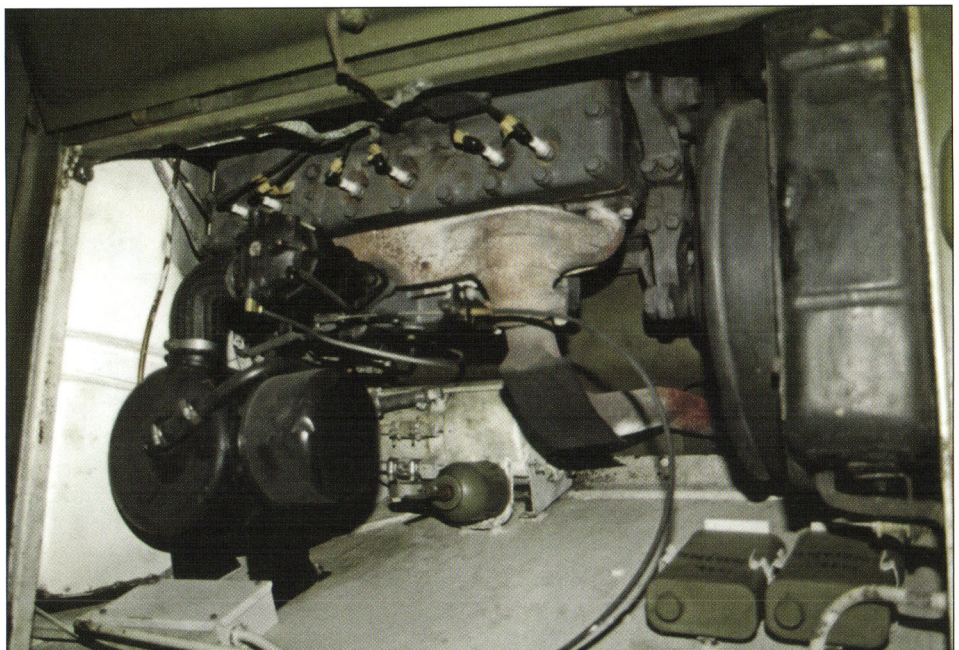
This side view clearly shows the thermostat housing along with the pipe that leads to the radiator. The enclosed thermostat was a bellows type that began to open at 160 degrees and was fully open by 176 degrees. When it was closed the water re-circulated through the engine via a by-pass pipe, not through the radiator.

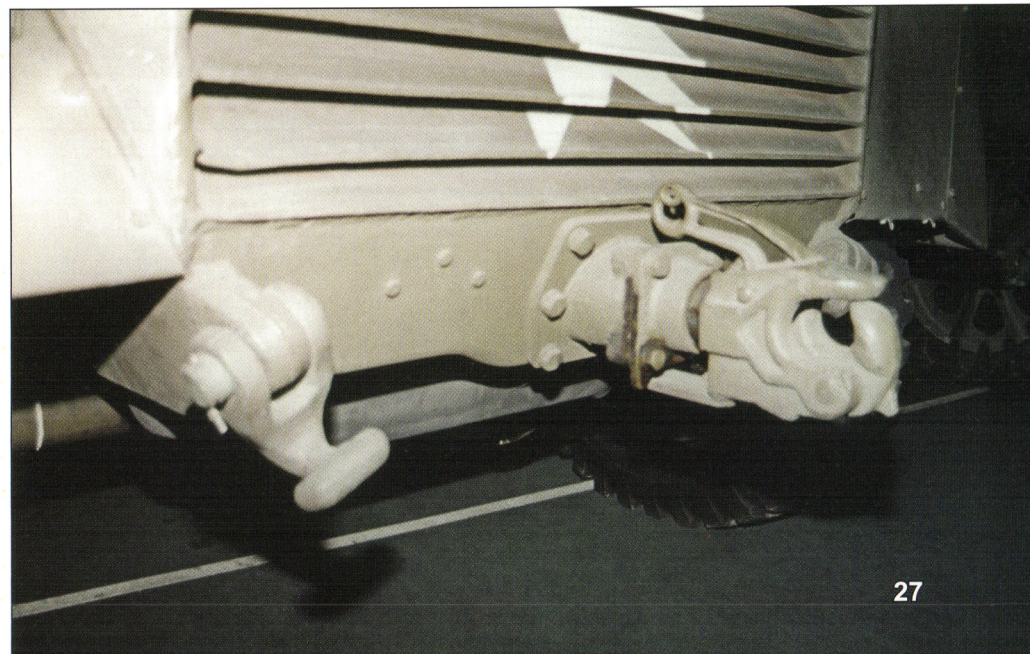
The air cleaner on the left is an oil bath type. Attached to it on the right is the air intake which contains a baffle pre-cleaner. The carburetor attached by the "L"-shaped pipe is a Zenith Model 29W-12. It was a single-barrel down-draft unit with two floats connected by one lever and it operates one needle valve.



The louvers at the rear of the engine compartment span the length of the radiator. Compared to the Hercules engine used in the M3A1, the engine mounted in the M8/M20 had a longer radiator and twin fans for cooling.

A towing hitch is located at the bottom of the engine louvers. Also located on the lower part of the frame on both sides are mounts for attaching towing pintles. The M8/M20 could tow a standard lightweight supply or ammunition trailer. In addition, in emergencies, it could pull small light artillery. Using its tow hooks the vehicle could also be towed or help tow vehicles stuck in the mud or snow.

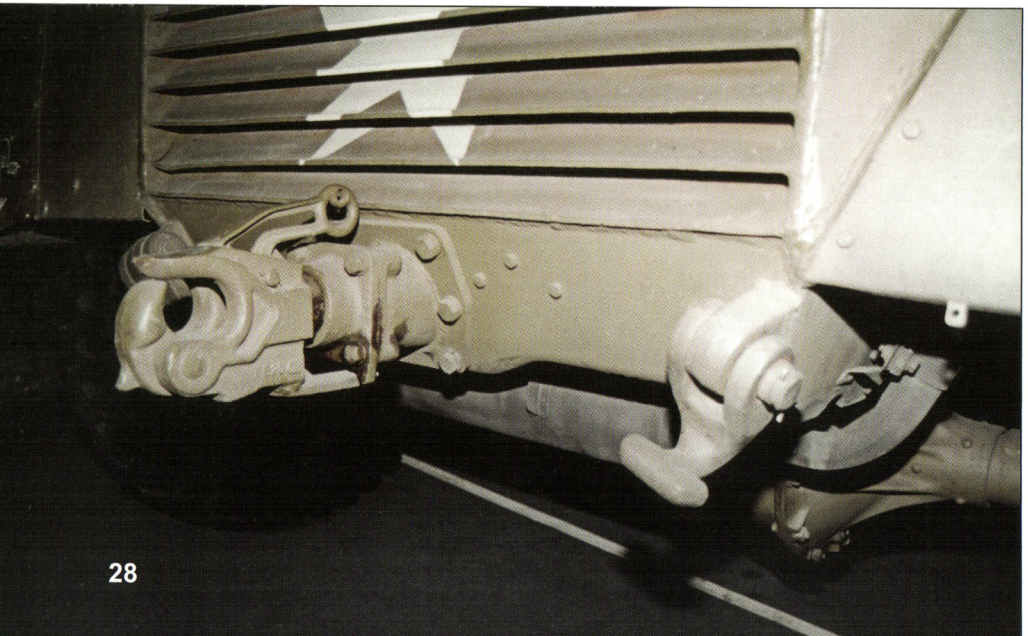




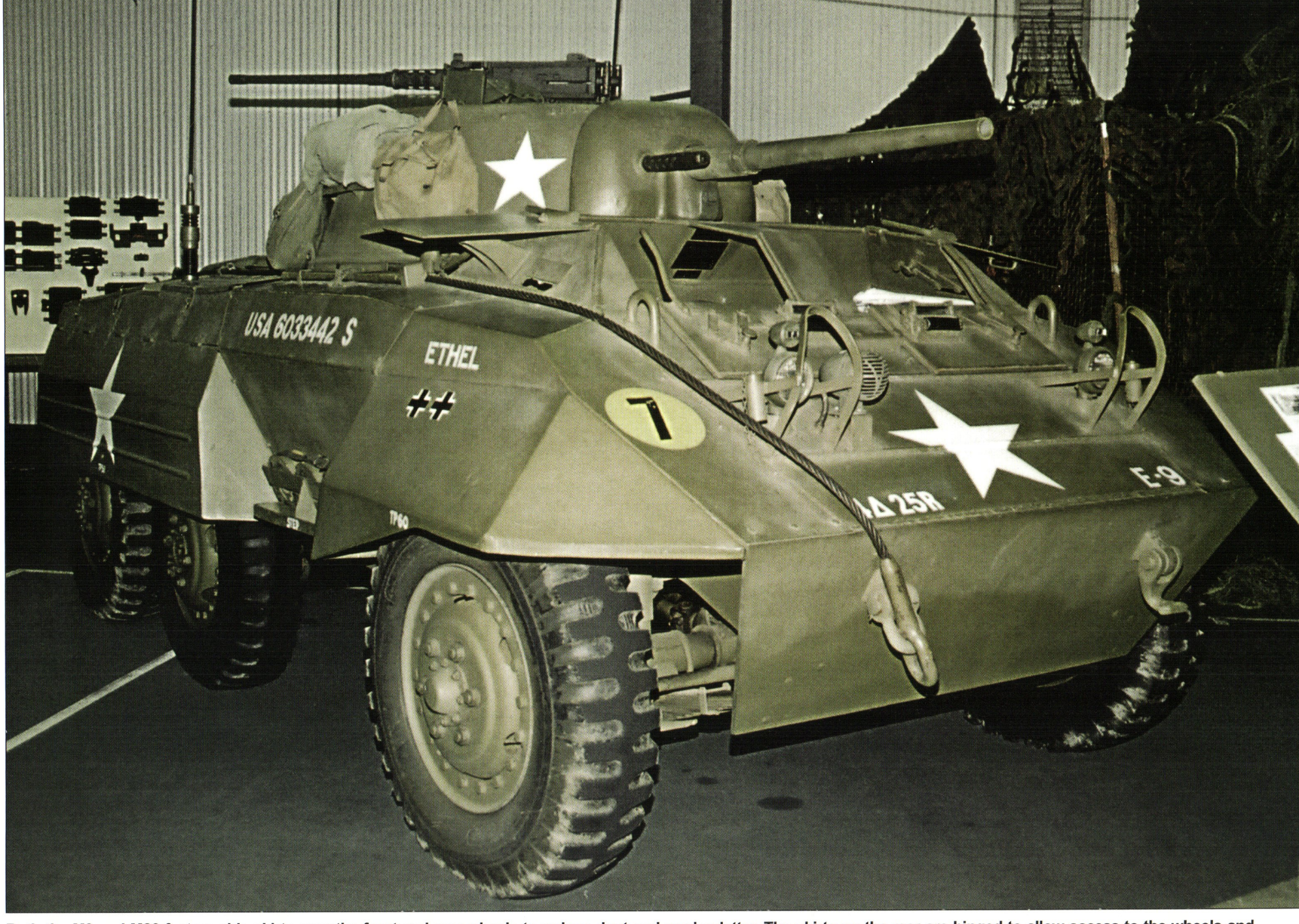
The pusher-type fans draw air out of the engine compartment and circulate it through the radiator fins and tubes. The large louvers allow for a smooth, even air flow.

The overall profile of the vehicle changes dramatically with the removal of the rear side skirts, as shown on this M20 undergoing restoration. (Hathaway via Hlavin)

The M8/M20 can tow the standard light cargo trailers that weigh up to a ton. Towing was normally undertaken during road marches and normally not in combat. The small handle on the top of the tow hook opens and closes the hook so as to allow the insertion and removal of a hitching mechanism. Hitching mechanisms are made of heavy cast metal.



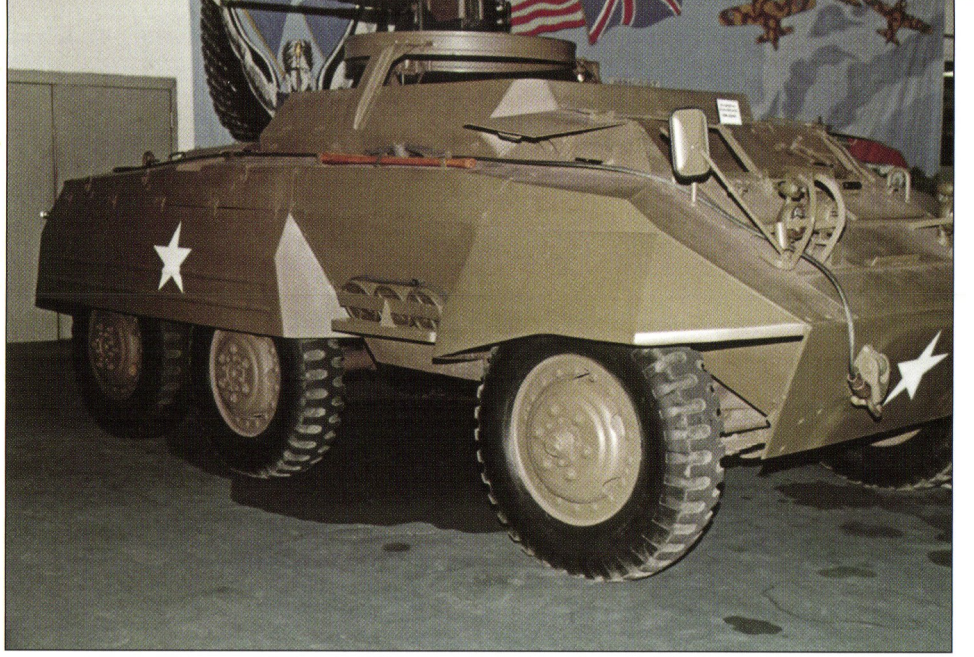
With the full installation of the sheet metal side skirts, the normal configuration of the M8/M20 is quite evident. The ribbed sides help reinforce the light metal construction. Five hinges allow the skirt to be raised for maintenance and to clean out the mud and snow. The main purpose of the skirts – which provide no protection from shrapnel, small arms fire, or artillery fire – is to help keep down dust. (Hathaway via Hlavin)



Both the M8 and M20 feature side skirts over the front and rear wheels to reduce dust and mud splatter. The skirts on the rear are hinged to allow access to the wheels and suspension for maintenance and to clean off caked mud. (M8 photo by Ward)

The skirts wrap around the rear and butt up to a plate that extends over from the rear of the engine compartment. All these sheet metal components provide no ballistic protection from shells or fragments.

The outline of the hull differs drastically when the skirts are removed as shown on this vehicle undergoing restoration. As seen here, the engine hatches open toward the center line and are held open by rods. These hatches are extremely heavy and care must to be taken in lifting them to avid injuries to hands. (Hathaway via Hlavin)



The tires on the vehicle are pneumatic, combat-type tires with a non-directional tread. They are 12-ply had have a tire size of 9.00 by 20.

The rear tires are inflated to only 50 pounds. Wheels are of the divided rim type. A lock ring holds the tires to the rim. To increase traction to achieve better movement through snow and mud, snow chains can be added. Such chains are relatively easy to mount and have proven very helpful. The photograph on page 71 illustrates how the chains were mounted.

The front tires are inflated to 60 pounds. The capacity for each tire at 65 pounds inflation is 3.450 pounds.

The front skirts, which are held in place by small bolts, are of one-piece welded construction.

The wheel bearings are a Timken-tapered roller-bearing type. The six wheels of the M8M20 provide mobility on normal surfaces but the vehicles can also operate in muddy, off-road and rough terrain conditions.

To hold the mines in place, a strap can be run between the sides of the rack. Small slots on the side frame allow the strap to be threaded through and pulled over the mines so they do not bounce out when the vehicle runs over rough terrain.

Initially there was a small rack to hold three mines between the front and rear tires. Some crews feared that enemy fire would set the mines off and often stored other equipment in their place.

The mine rack is welded onto the side of the hull. Extending out at the bottom is a small frame step for the crew to use when mounting and dismounting the vehicle.

Late in 1944 the mine racks were eliminated. In their place, side-storage panniers were substituted. The top opened up to allow access to the interior. (Michael Green)

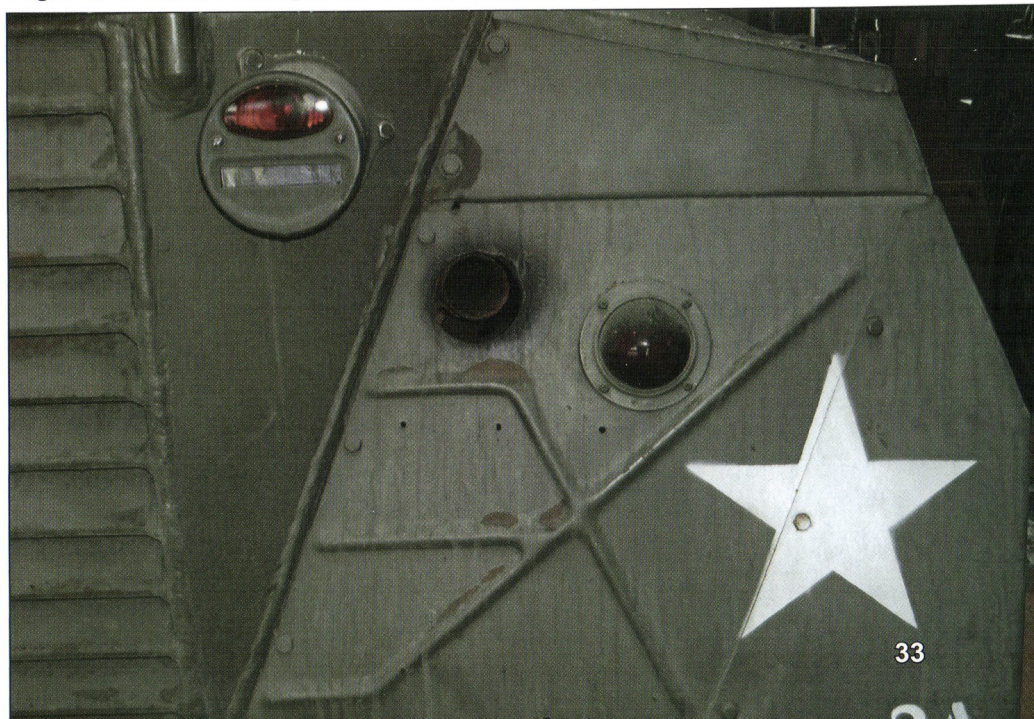
The rear side skirts are held in place by five sets of hinges attached to the sides of the storage bins. Bolts secure them to the side of the hull behind the mine rack and at the rear.

Two long embossed ribs gave additional strength to the long rear side skirts. The ends of the skirts wrap around the rear and are bolted to the side plates.

The end of the side skirt and its bolt attachment can easily be seen here. The supporting plate also attaches to the frame in the same manner.

The exhaust from the muffler is piped up the right side and exits through the rear panel. The heat from the pipe would scorch the thin sheet metal and blister the paint.

The right side is a mirror image of the left side. The side plate has embossed reinforcement ridges for additional strength. The lower red light is a post-war addition.

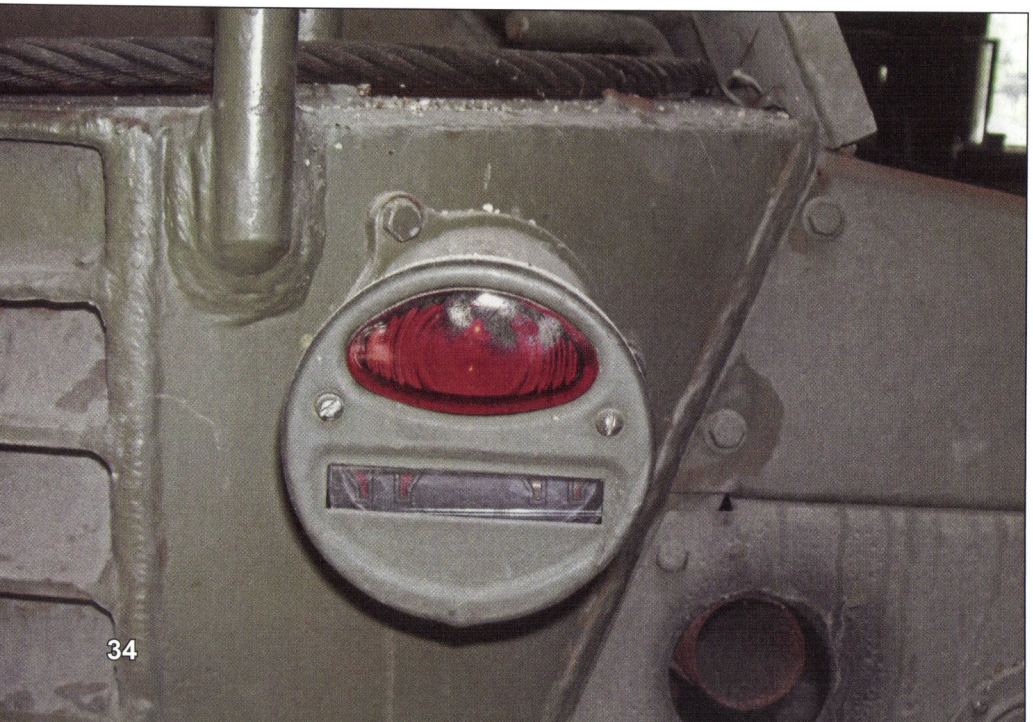


On either side of the rear engine louver are two taillights. Below the right taillight is the opening for the muffler exhaust. The muffler and part of the exhaust pipe can be seen underneath the vehicle.

The right taillight has a blackout stop light on top and a blackout taillight on the bottom. This restored vehicle lacks the proper lights.

The left service taillight has two lenses. The top is a stop light and the bottom is a blackout taillight.

There are two lift rings located just above the lights. These rings are similar to the pair on the front of the hull. Thick weld beads hold each ring in place. To keep the tow cable in place, it has here been threaded through the ring.



This pristine M8 with its side skirts intact takes part in a field exercise. Under combat conditions the vehicles' appearance would change drastically. The upside-down national insignia is unusual and also seems rather larger then normal. (U.S. Army)

This M8 in the Pacific shows how the side skirts could be distorted. The rear skirt behind the mine rack has been bent in and appears to be rubbing against the second tire. (U.S. Army)

In the field the side skirts were kept on for as long as possible. This M8 has been fitted with the field modified machine gun ring based on the M49 ring mount. (U.S. Army)

Often the rear skirts were removed under extremely snowy or muddy conditions. This M8 has been fitted with tire chains to improve mobility in the snow. The camouflaged vehicle blends in with the snow while the trailing vehicle with its olive drab paint scheme stands out in stark contrast to the winter environment. (U.S. Army)

Front side skirts were also removed from some vehicles. In this configuration the vehicle looks very similar to the T22 prototype. (U.S. Army)

The appearance of the M8/M20 was greatly altered by the removal of the side skirts, which were frequently damaged in combat or torn off by obstacles. Crews often found it easier to remove than repair damaged side skirts. Removal of the skirts also helped keep mud from clogging the wheel wells. (U.S. Army)

Skirts were frequently removed from M8 vehicles because of their extensive use in combat. In this example the upper skirt hinges appear to have been removed or torn off. (U.S. Army)

Skirts have been removed from most if not all of the M8s lined up in what appears to be a post-war storage depot. The lower section of the third vehicle from the right appears to have been cut out. Size and placement of the stars vary considerably. (U.S. Army)

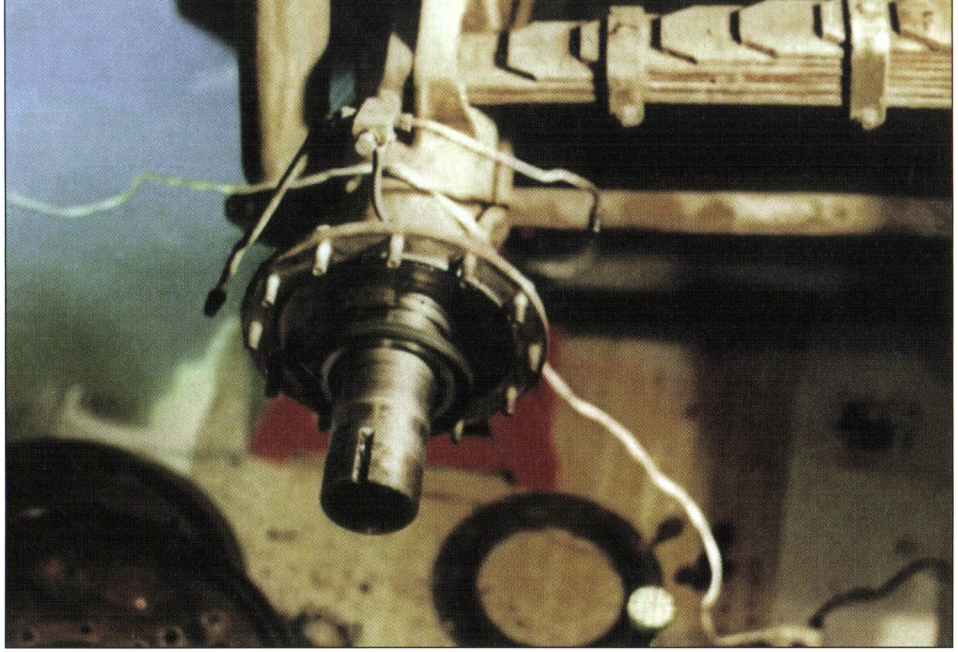
This ragged looking vehicle is a far cry from the M8 that left the factory. Its side skirts are missing. Its engine hatches are open for better cooling, and the retaining chains hang down from the storage bins. The crew has also welded storage brackets for their gear on the rear of the vehicle and on at least one of the hatches. (U.S. Army)

The front springs for the axle are of the semi-elliptic type. Four spring clamps on each spring hold the leaves in place.

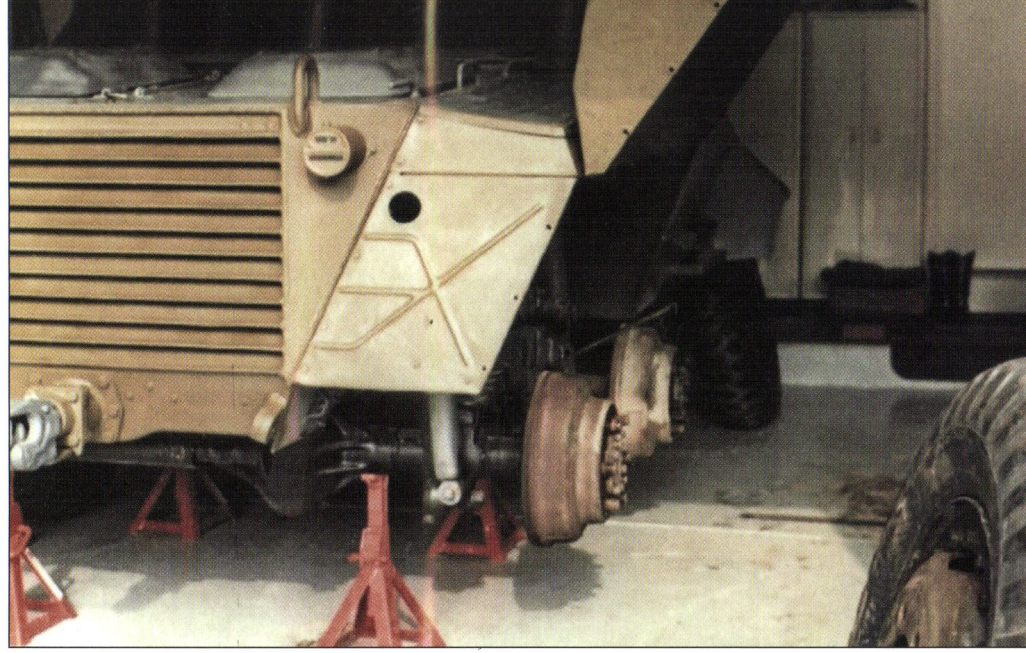
The propeller shaft runs back from the universal joint yoke on the axle to the transfer case. The tube that has the bend in it is the tie rod. The tie rods have ball joint ends. The left tie rod has a right-hand thread of 12 to an inch while the right one has 14 to an inch. Toe-in adjustment of the front wheels is accomplished by the length of the tie rod.

At the end of each spring is a spring eye that allows the spring to be fastened to the spring shackle. The spring shackle is attached to the spring hanger that is attached to the hull.

Undergoing renovation, this M20 offers a view of the rear axle assembly. Above and below the spring, which is in the center, are the torque rods. There are shock absorbers at both ends of the assembly. (Hathaway via Hlavin)



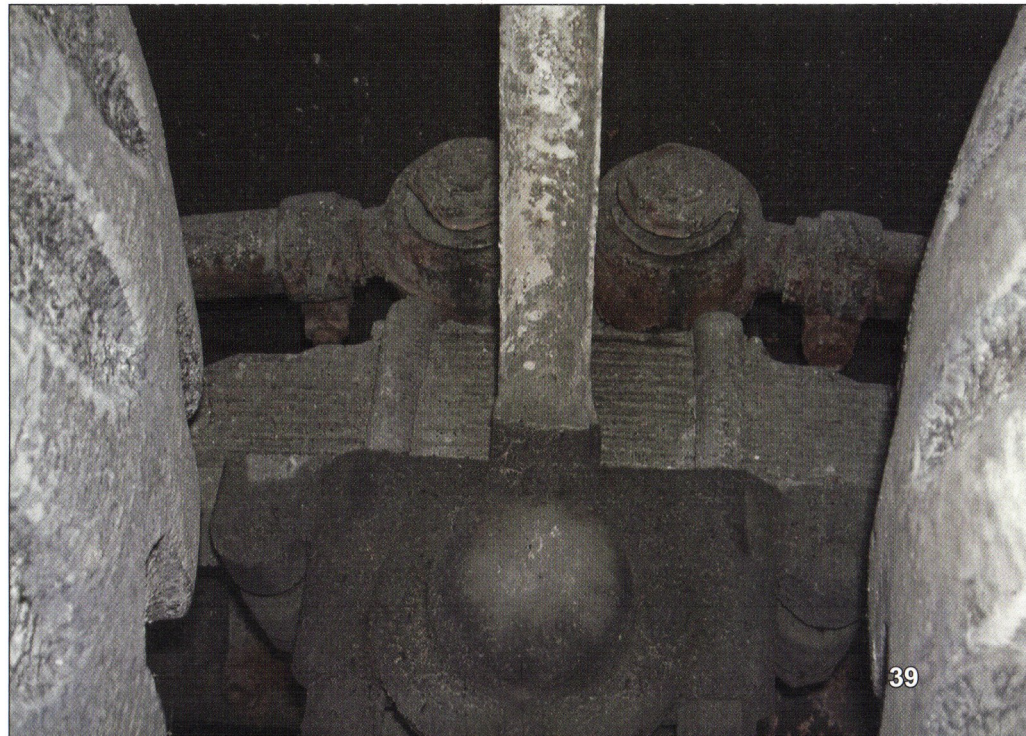
The axle flange shaft, to which the entire wheel assembly is mounted, is seen here up close. (Hathaway via Hlavin)



This rear view of the axle assembly with the vehicle's side skirt removed shows how the shock absorber cants in. (Hathaway via Hlavin)

This M20 is being prepared for restoration. Very little of the axle and spring assembly is visible when the tires are mounted. (Hathaway via Hlavin)

The lower connecting point for the shock absorber on the rear axle is seen here. The shock absorber is a Gabriel direct-acting type. The lower torque rod is at the bottom.

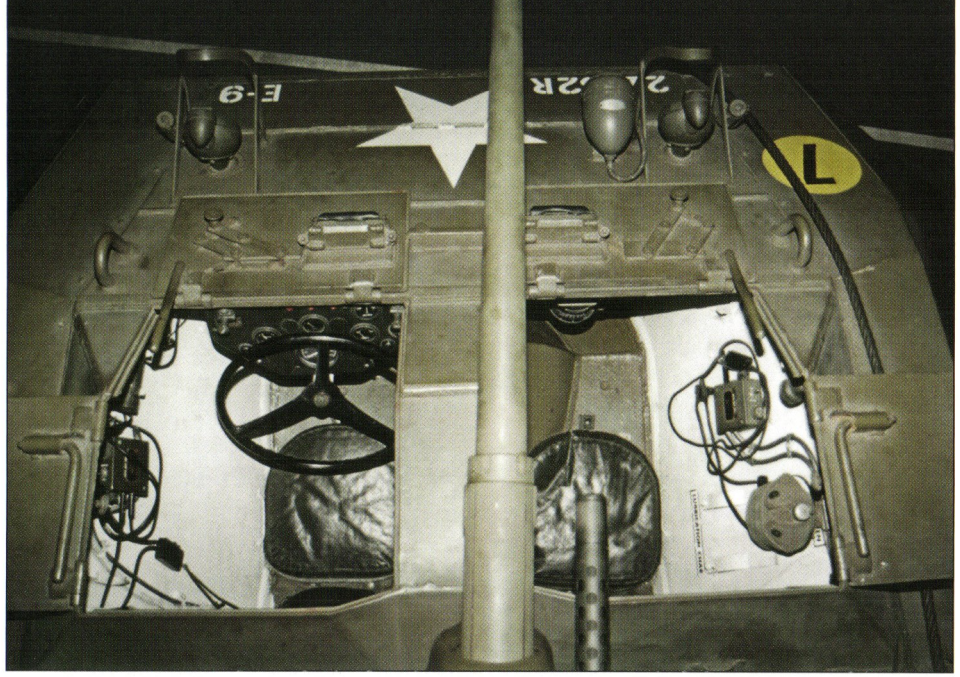


The entire rear assembly is mounted on the bogie bracket on each side of the vehicle. A rod connects each side of the bogie brackets. The upper torque rods are mounted directly on the bogie bracket.

The universal joint yoke is visible here to the right of the axle. In the background are the bogie bracket and the lower torque rods.

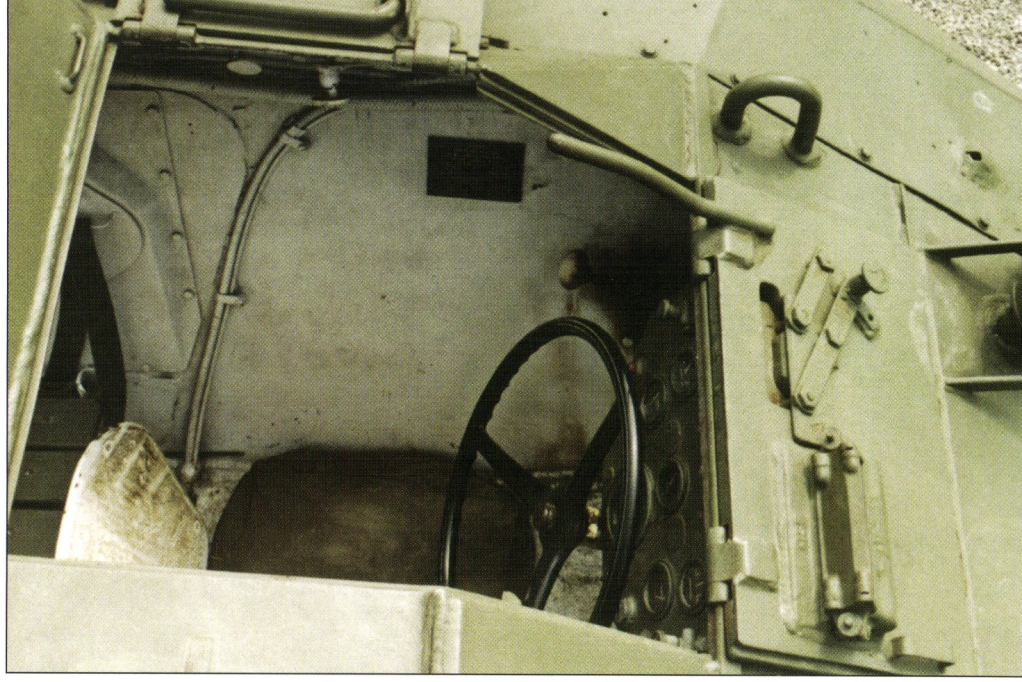
Two propeller shafts run back to the rear axles from the two speed transfer cases. Each axle is powered.

Directly behind the rear axle is the muffler. The exhaust pipe runs up the right side to the rear and exits out the rear panel below the lights. The oval shaped muffler is located at the rear of the vehicle, directly below the radiator.



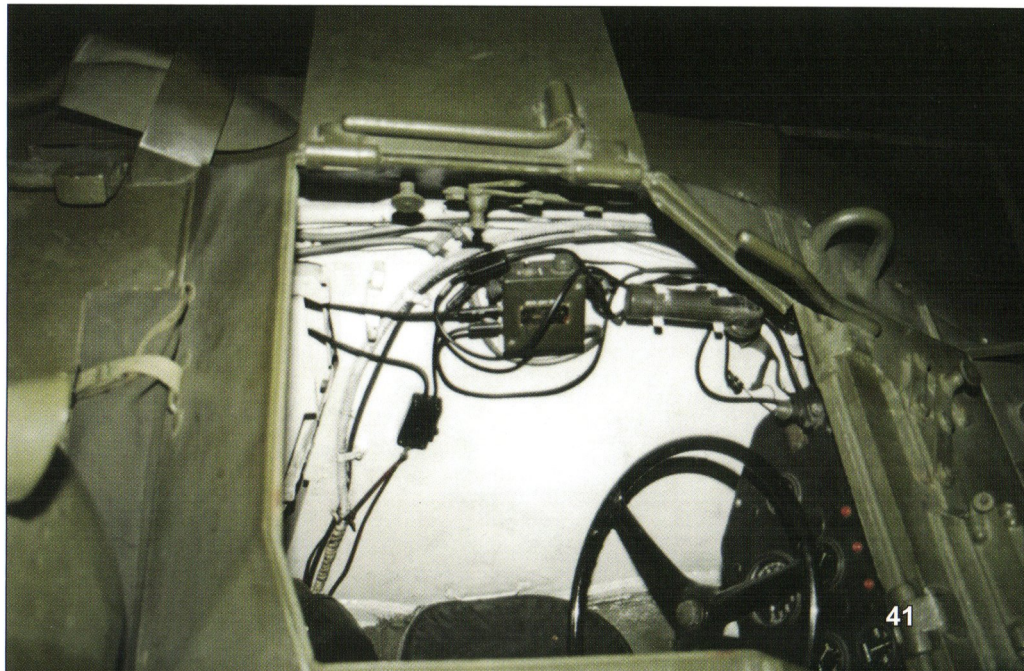
The driver's seat is on the left and the co-driver's seat on the right in both the M8 and M20. Since his position had no driving controls, however, the co-driver was basically redundant, especially after the deletion of the bow machine gun on the T22.

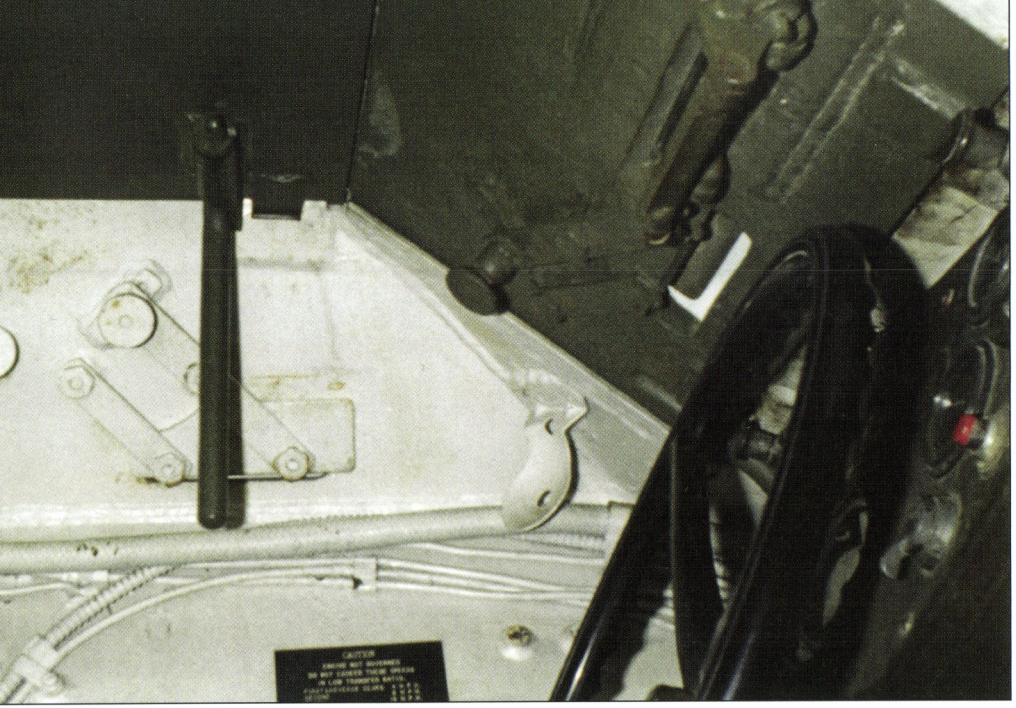
The driver uses a steering wheel to maneuver the vehicle. Directly in front of him is the instrument panel. To his right is the gear shift.



The spaces for the driver and co-driver are nearly identical. The only real difference is that on the M8 there is a small cutout to allow for the cannon to depress at the rear of the driver's position in the center. On the M20 this is a straight plate since there is no need to have an indentation since there turret was not fitted.

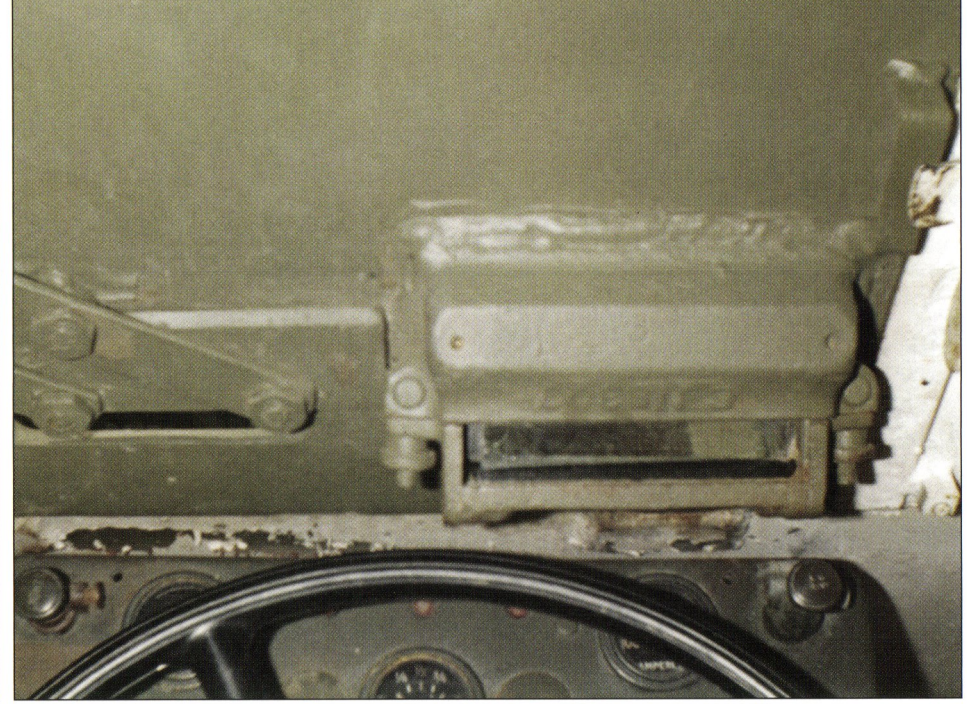
On the driver's left side are the intercom box and a bracket for a flashlight.





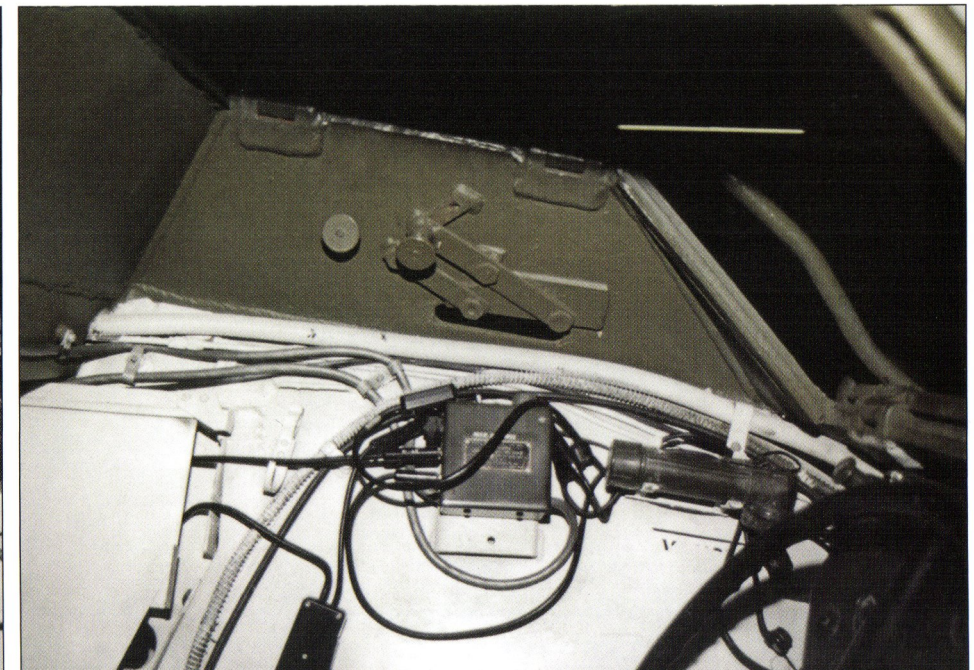
When buttoned up, front and side visibility is very limited.

The panel behind the driver's seat in the M8 has a small indentation into the driver's compartment to allow the cannon to depress. On the M20, which had no turret, this panel is flat and straight across. The black plates contain vehicle data.



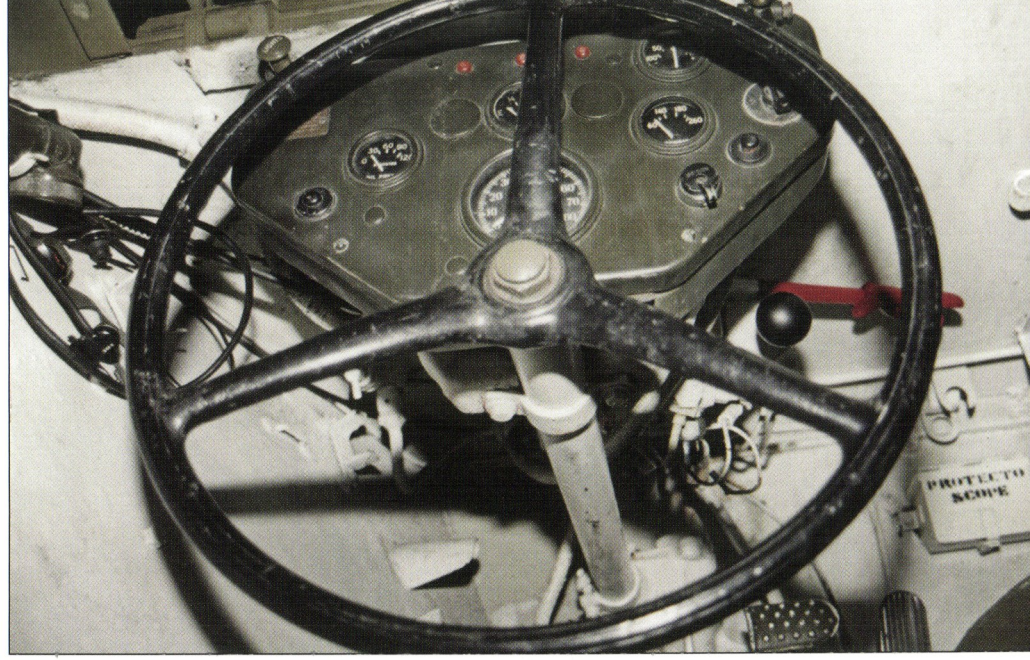
Visibility is through the protectoscope and the front and side vision slots. If at all possible the crew kept the hatches open in order to have a better view.

Above the intercom box is the shutter for the side viewing port. This is a mirror image of the one on the co-driver's side.



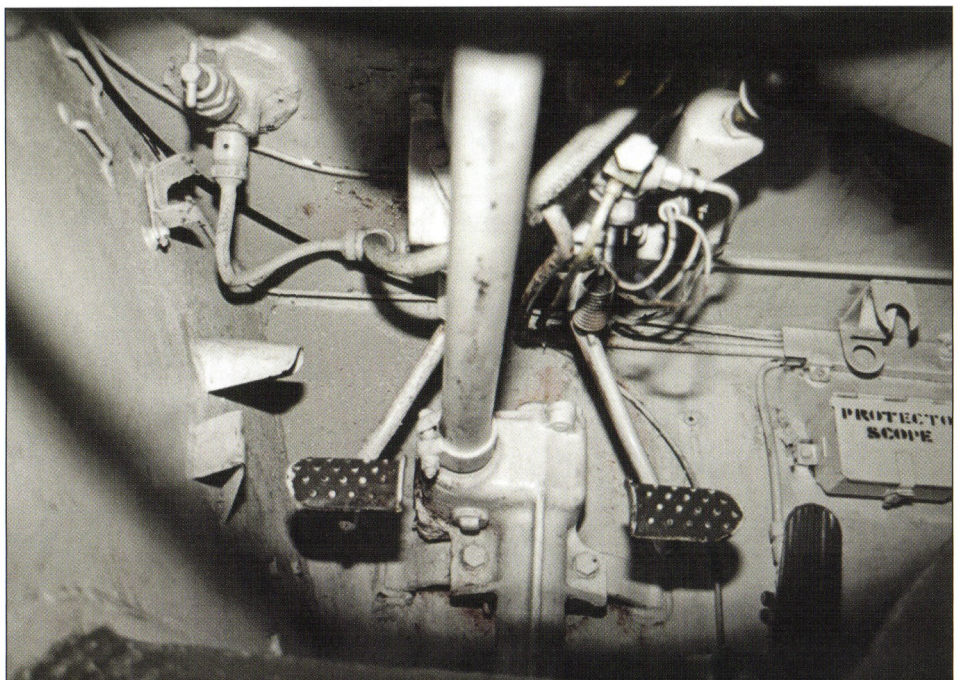
The steering wheel and brake and clutch pedals are similar to those found on an American automobile of similar vintage. To the right is the vehicle compass. The driver's compartment is relatively roomy, especially when the hatches are left open.

The clutch pedal is on the left while the brake pedal is on the right. To the right of the brake pedal is the accelerator pedal. The M8/M20 is easy to operate. The roomy conditions help reduce driver fatigue.



The steering wheel is made of hard, black plastic. The main gauges on the instrument panel are the speedometer just above the center of the wheel, the gas gauge above it, the oil pressure gauge to the left, and the engine temperature gauge to the right. Above the engine gauge is the ammeter.

Behind the driver's position is storage for a water can, fire extinguisher, and gun parts. To the right of the water can is a sponson that could be used for ammunition or a radio.

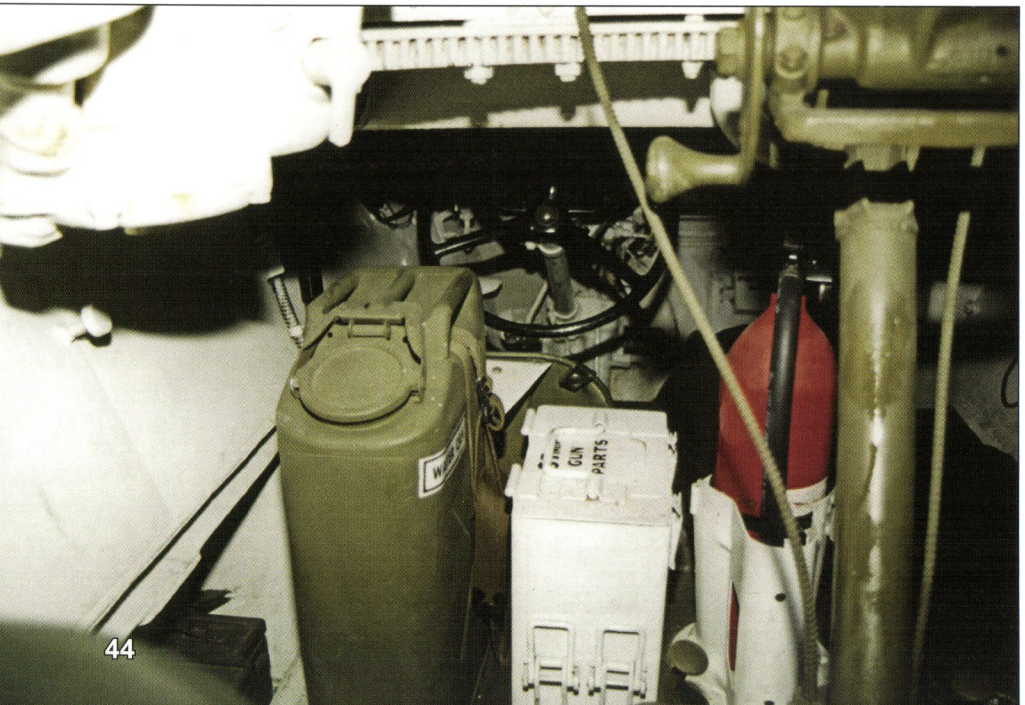


The fire extinguisher seen in this close-up view of the area behind the driver's seat is not an actual one used on the vehicle in World War II.

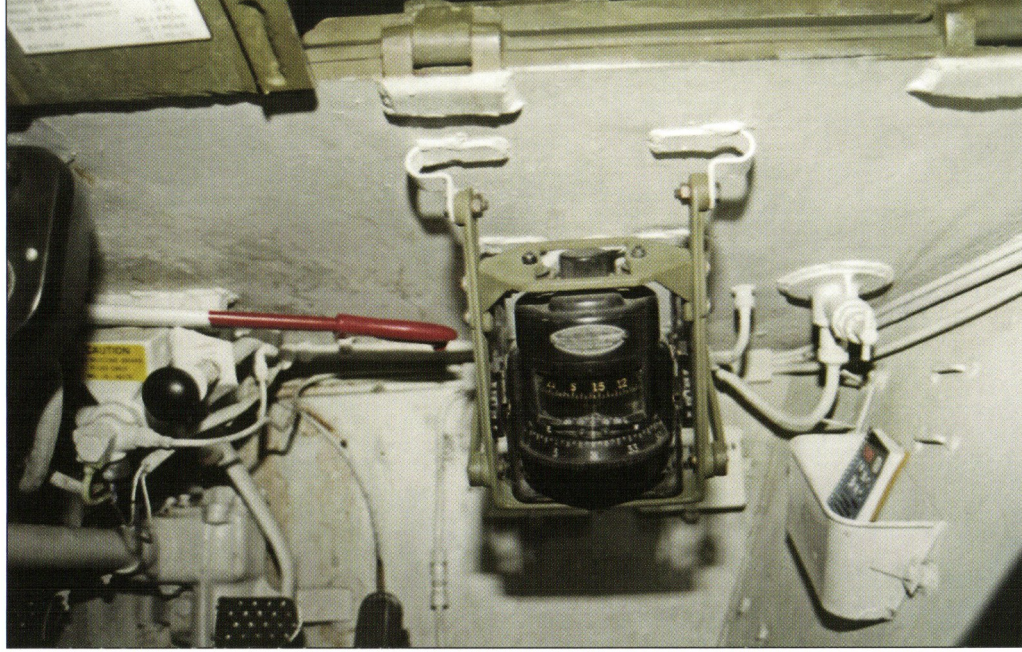
The driver's position is viewed from behind, over the water can, gun parts, and fire extinguisher. Gear and fired shell casings could jam the turret basked in the M8 if not stowed carefully. Lacking a turret, the M20 presented no such difficulty.

On either side of the hull were sponsons that could be used for a variety of equipment, radios, and ammunition storage racks. Ammunition and communications equipment received priority over personnel equipment for storage in the sponsons.

The co-driver's compartment, seen here from above, lacks steering and driving controls. A compass is mounted in front of the position. To his right is the intercom connection.

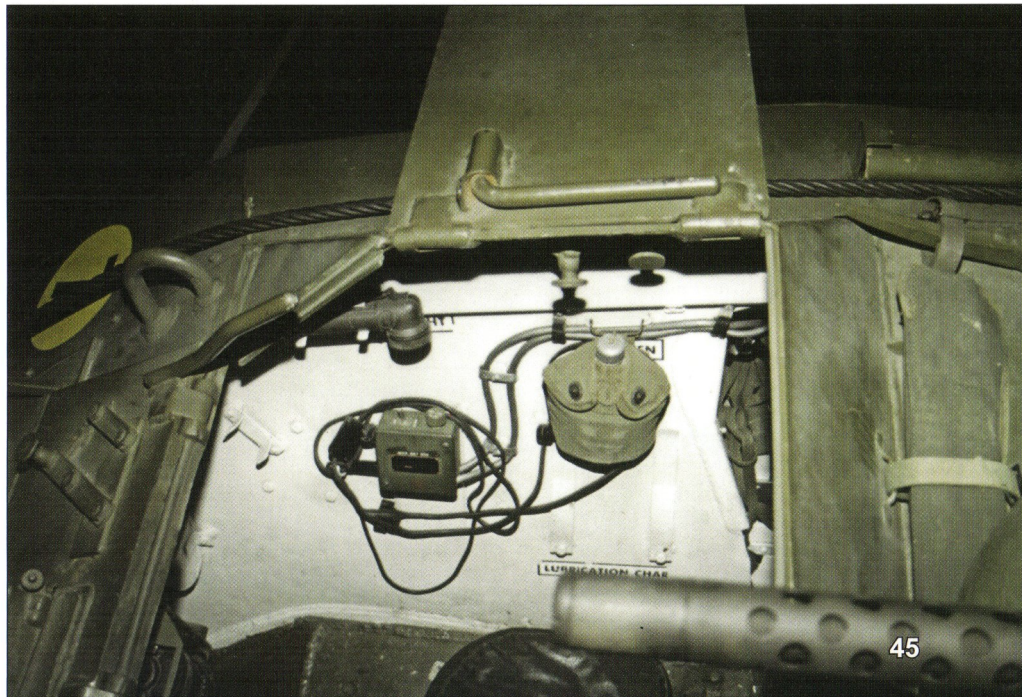


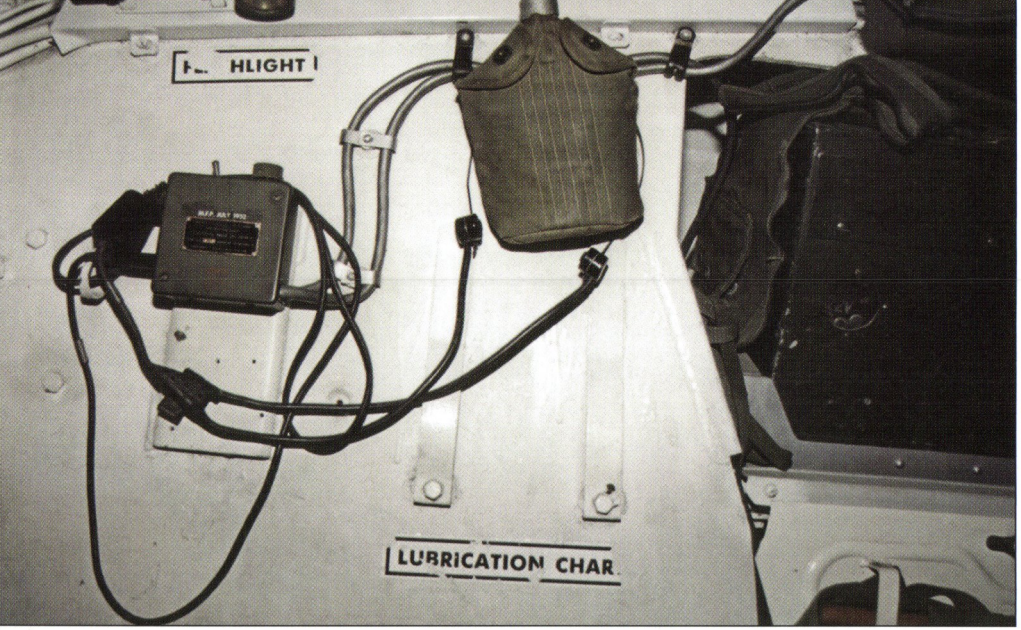
The gear shift lever is on the floor between the two drivers. It has four forward and one reverse gear. The backs of the seats could fold down.



Directly in front of the co-driver is the Sherrill Compass. The course indicator scale is on the bottom. The movable index is above that.

To the right of the co-driver's seat are the intercom connection and several brackets for gear. The knobs protruding just below the hatch are for the shutter and the release latch for the hatch.





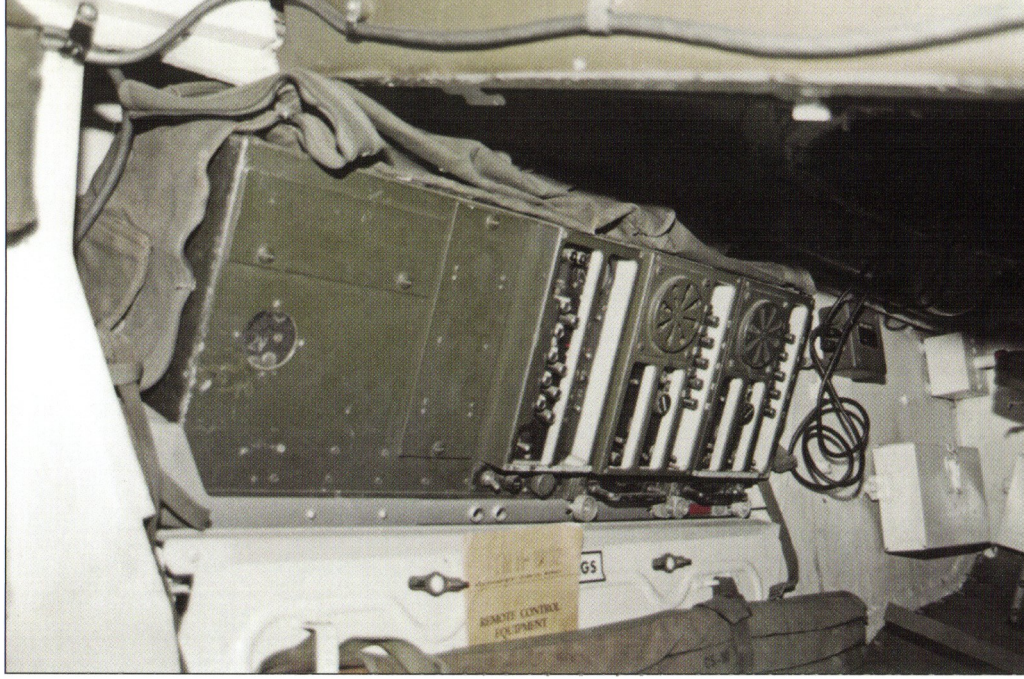
The intercom connection box, flashlight bracket, canteen hook, and lubrication chart holder are on the hull wall. To the right is the sponson equipped with a radio.

The driver and co-driver seats lack springs but are fitted with black leather cushions that could be removed for repair or replacement. In both the M8 and M20, the seat backs fold down to allow easier access to the rear compartment. Hard to see from overhead, the sides of the vehicle interior are white. The floor, however, is painted olive drab to make the open vehicle less obvious to enemy aircraft.

The area behind the co-driver's position is slightly less cluttered than that behind the driver. On the wall underneath the radio are wooden signal flag poles. Just behind the fire extinguisher can be seen the foot pedal for firing the cannon or machine gun.

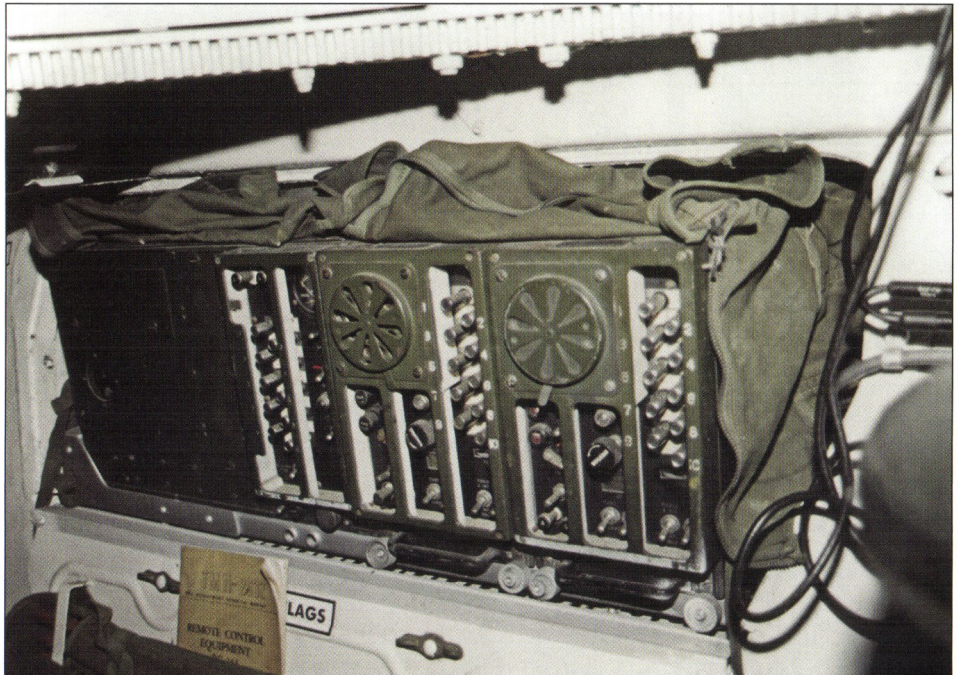
This is the general configuration of the sponson on the right side of the hull. The split-door arrangement is a little different from that on the left, folding inward. It lacks a shelf, offering more room and versatility for configuring the vehicle in ways appropriate for whatever mission it may be assigned.

The lack of a shelf allows considerable room for storage. A 54-round ammunition rack originally occupied this space in the M-8.

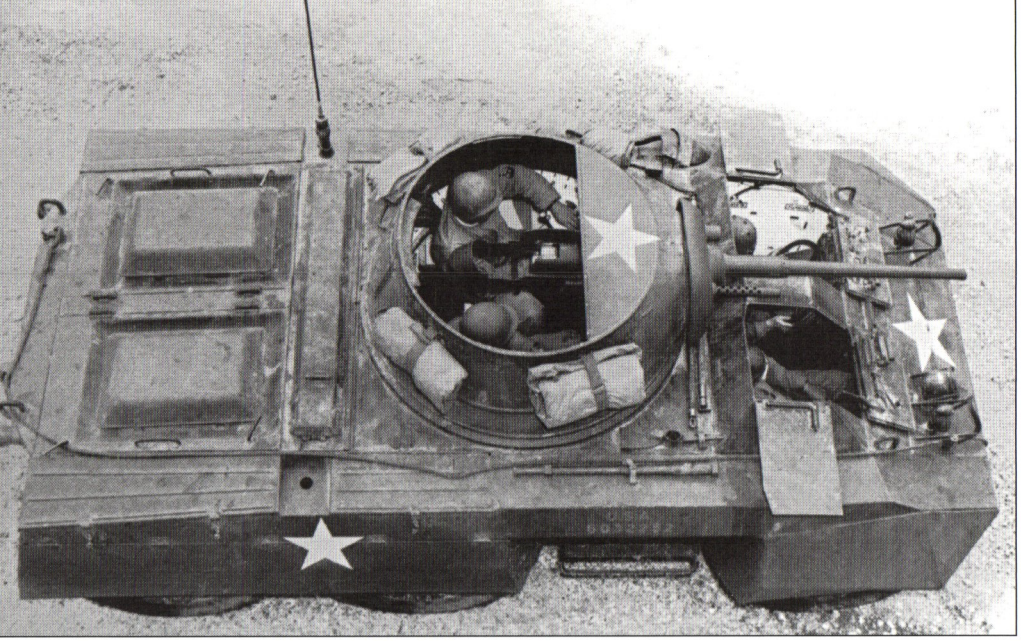


Here is an example of how a radio is fitted into the right side sponson. Depending on its mission, the M-8 and M-20 can carry a variety of radios. This is the SCR-508.

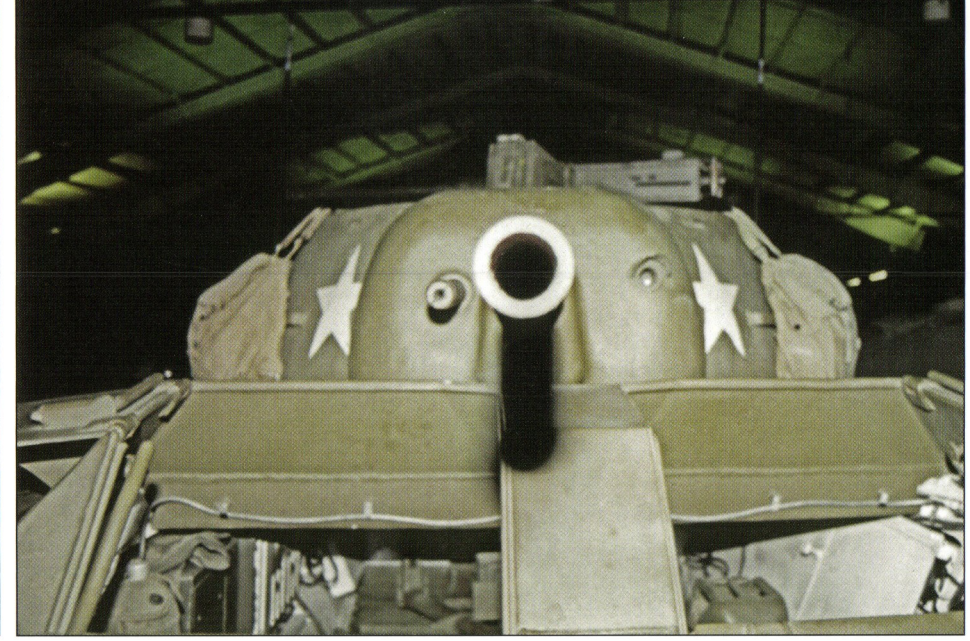
The vehicles can carry either the SCR-506 and/or the 508, 510, 608, or 610. Early units in 1943 also carried the SCR-193 and SCR-312 combination, due to shortages of the SCR-508. The canvas cover protects the radio against the elements.



The left sponson differs slightly from the right sponson and has a different door arrangement. The sponsons can be configured a number of different ways, depending on needed radio arrangements and ammunition storage.



The 37mm cannon is mounted in an open topped, welded turret on the M8. The crew of four consisted of a driver and co-driver in the front and a commander and gunner in the turret. (PAM)



To the right of the 37mm cannon (seen here head on) is a .30caliber machine gun and to the left is the cannon's sight. Rifling is barely visible on the inside of the cannon barrel.

The cast homogeneous gun shield is one inch thick and curved for additional ballistic protection. Above the barrel are casting numbers. Below the barrel is the bolt attaching it to the gun mount.

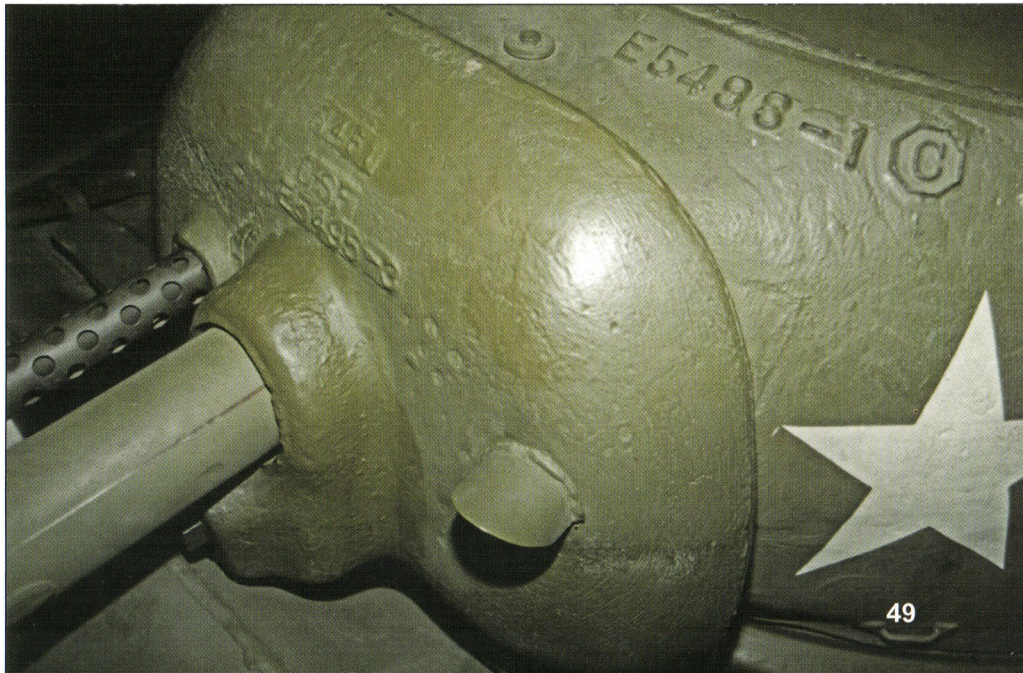
The differences between the M8 and M20 are featured in this heat-to-head meeting of a French M20 on the left and an American M8 on the right. The removal of the M8 turret and the addition of a fixed superstructure on the hull basically turned the M8 into the M20. (PAM)

The air-cooled Browning M1919A4 coaxial .30-caliber machine gun is mounted on the right side of the cannon. The original T22 prototype had a hull-mounted machine gun but this was removed on the M88.

The 37mm cannon can be manually elevated from +20 to -10 degrees. It can manually traverse 360 degrees and has a maximum firing rate of 30 rounds per minute.

To the left of the gun is an M70D telescopic sight.

The mantlet covering the cannon and machine gun is one inch thick. There were minor variations in its outline during the production run. On the turret can be seen the American Steel Foundries casting symbol. Both the gun mantlet and the side of the turret feature rough cast textures.



The mantlet curves back over the 37mm cannon, sight, and machine gun. It is affixed to the cannon mount.

There are numerous tie downs on the side and top of the turret for storage. The top turret armor is .25 inch thick. Because of limited internal stowage, vehicles in the field were often heavily loaded down with extra gear attached to the side of the turret.

The mantlet moves with the cannon as it elevates or depresses between +20 and -10 degrees. To allow for depression straight ahead, the driver's compartment has a small cut out that is not present on the M20, which lacked a turret and cannon.

In addition to the tie downs there is also a storage rail for gear along the side of the turret. The side armor is .75 inch thick.

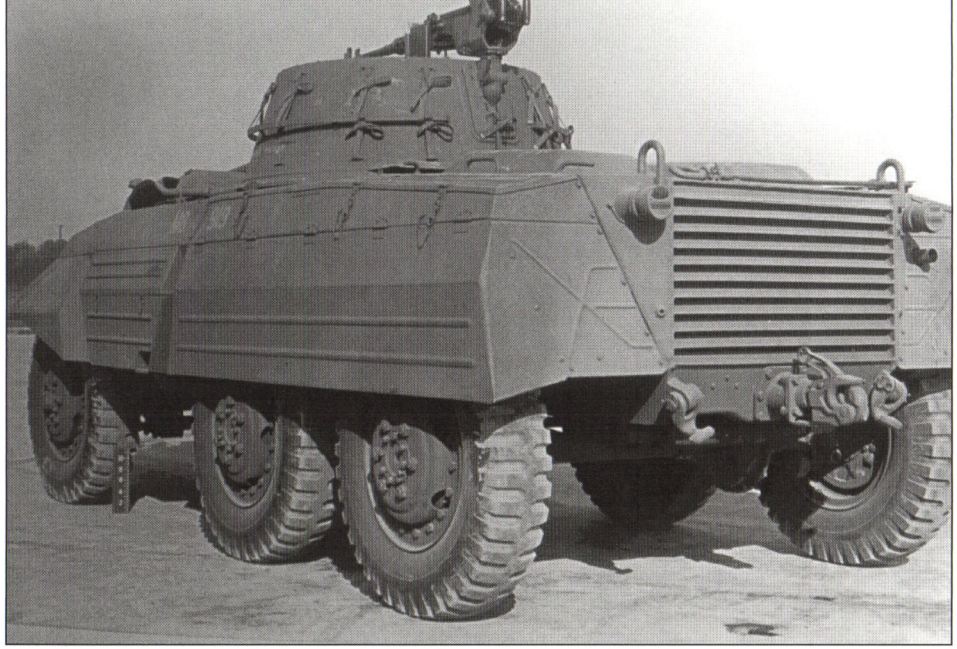
There are a number of variations in the supports used for the ring mount. This one is higher than the more common type. It also has extra supports in the front. (PAM)

The M8 was also armed with .50-caliber machine gun in several types of mount. One of the more common types was a field-modified type, utilizing the M49 truck ring mount. This one is fitted with the smaller ammunition box. (PAM)

When first committed to action, the M8 did not have a ring mount, as seen on this M8 in Italy. Complaints from crews led to the improvisation of a ring mount that used the M49 truck mount until a mount was approved for production.

Indecision as to how to arm the M8, and the delay in a light-weight mount led to the need for field modifications and installations. The .50-caliber machine gun was used extensively against ground targets during reconnaissance and patrolling. (PAM)

The supports for the ring mount were also used to attach extra gear. This M8 crew added a small bar around the support to secure additional gear. Crews loaded down their vehicles with anything that could increase survival and personnel comfort. (PAM)

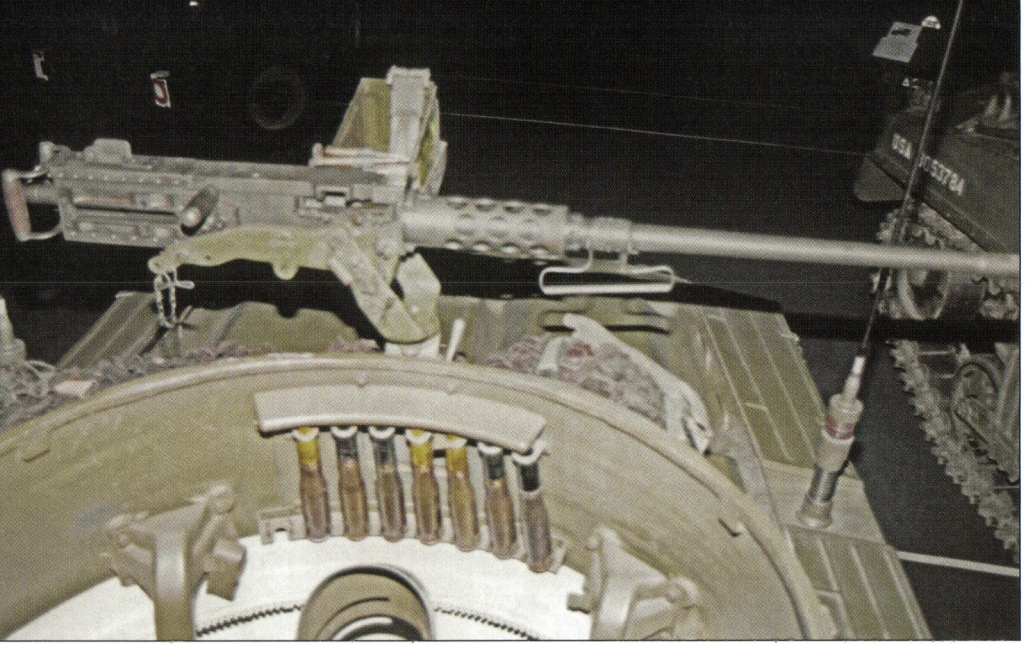


In place of the ring mount, a pintle mount has been added to the rear of the turret. The original model was the folding D67511. Confusion on which mount to use resulted in delays, leading to the field modifications. (PAM)

This restored M8 features a simplified pintle mount on its rear, a location that restricts the arc of fire from inside the turret by the crew.

The small lever on the left side of the mount allows the gun to be locked in place. Various clips and pins can further secure the machine gun to stabilize it when it is not being fired.

The ammunition box holds 100 rounds of ammunition on a disintegrating metallic-link belt. It weighted approximately 35 pounds.



The Browning M2 used on the M8 is one of the most reliable weapons developed for the Army. Used in numerous roles it is still in service today in the U.S. military and many foreign countries.

Belt fed, the .50-caliber machine gun has a high rate of fire. It can accommodate several types of ammunition and is devastating against ground targets and light vehicles. The weapon is shown here with the larger ammunition box.

With minor rearrangement of internal fittings, ammunition can be fed from either side of the M2 .50-caliber machine gun. Maximum effective range is 2,000 yards.

The heavy barrel is removable when it heated up due to sustained fire. The perforated cooling jacket helps to cool the barrel during sustained firing.

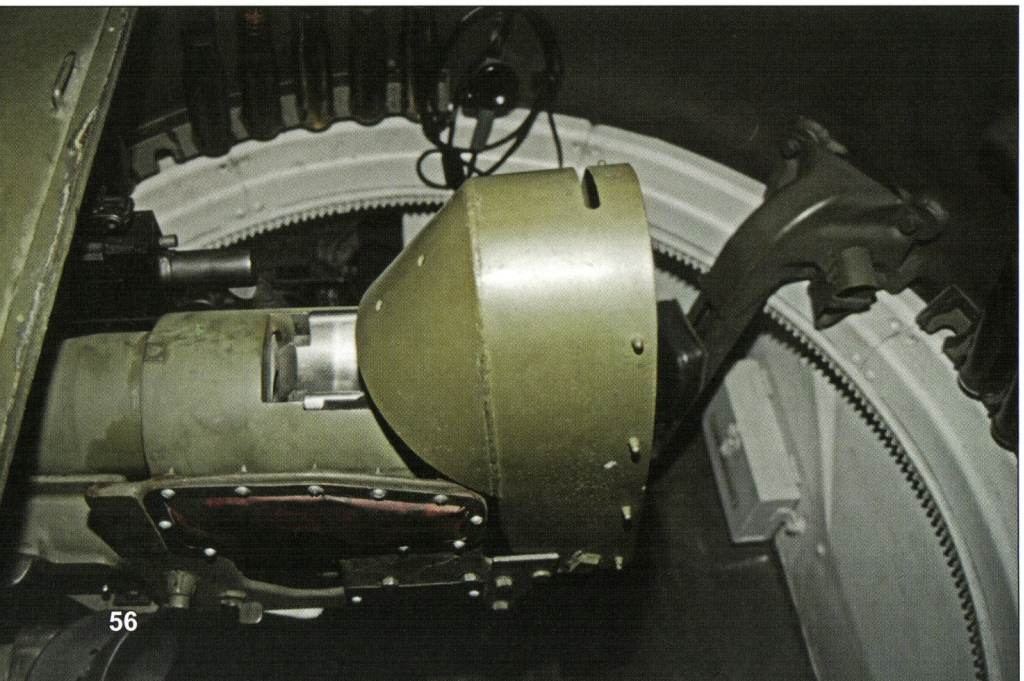
The open-top turret is fitted with a 37mm cannon. The commander's seat is on the right side while the gunner's position is on the left.

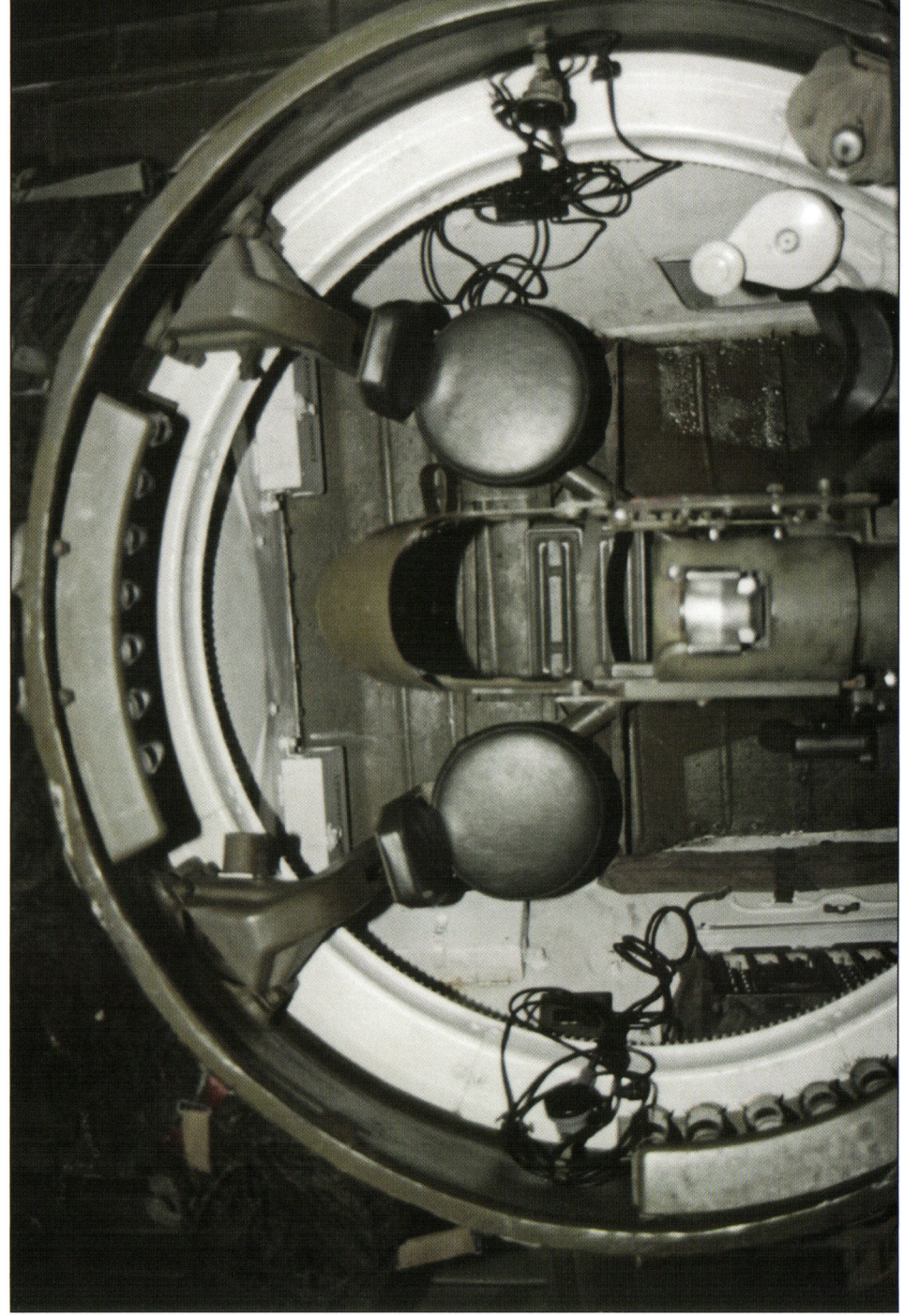
On the right side of the gun is a coaxial .30-caliber machine gun. This could be fired independently of the main armament.

To the left of the gun is a padded M70D telescopic sight for the gunner. To accommodate miscellaneous pieces of gear, numerous tie downs have been welded to the interior side of the turret.

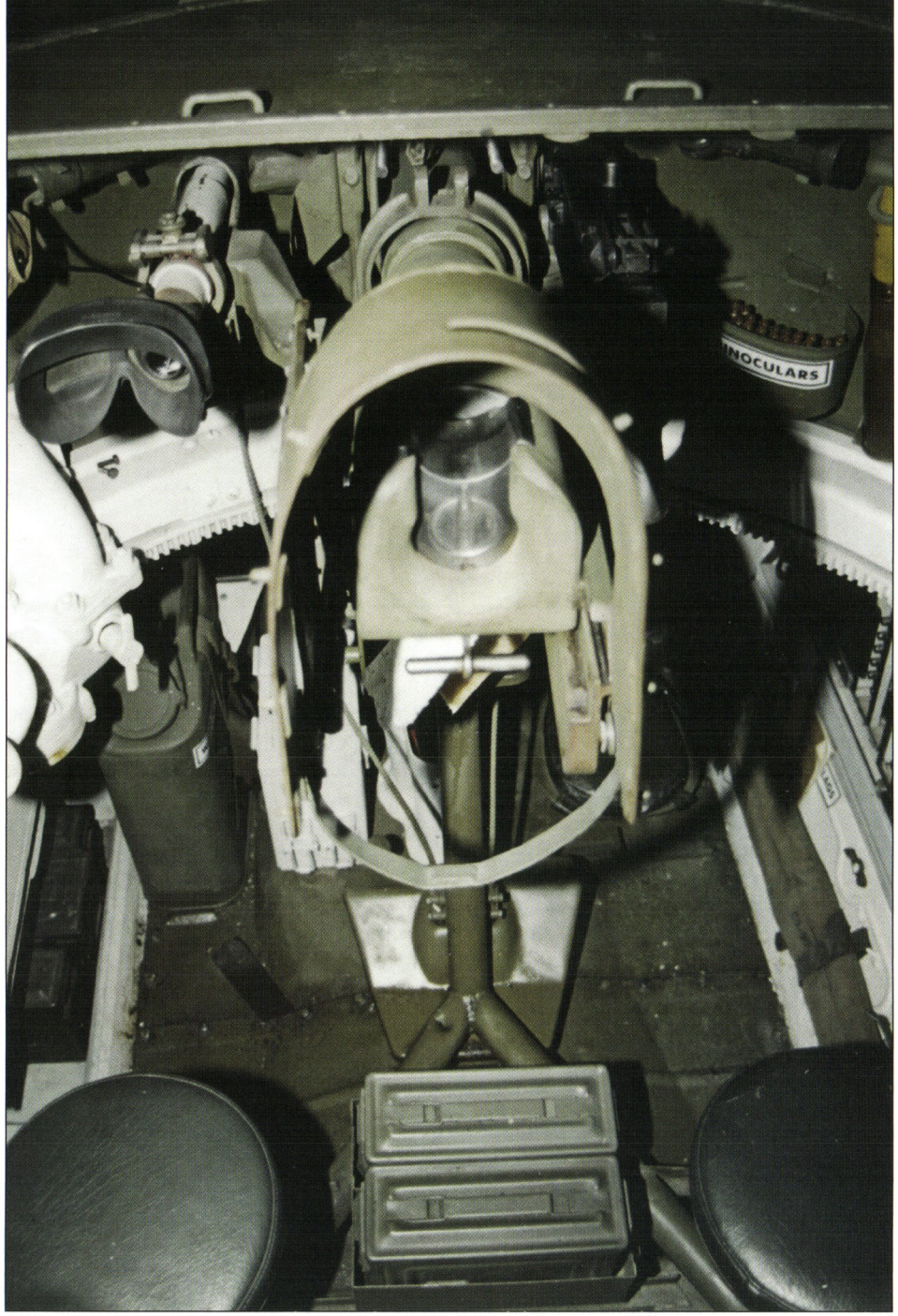
The gunner's padded M70D sight is visible to the left in this view of the commander's seat from across the turret. On the other side of the cannon is the back of the coaxial machine gun.

The rear of the guard can be lifted up to allow more movement within the confined turret interior. The metal fitting behind the guard is the seat frame for the commander's seat, which is attached to the side of the turret.

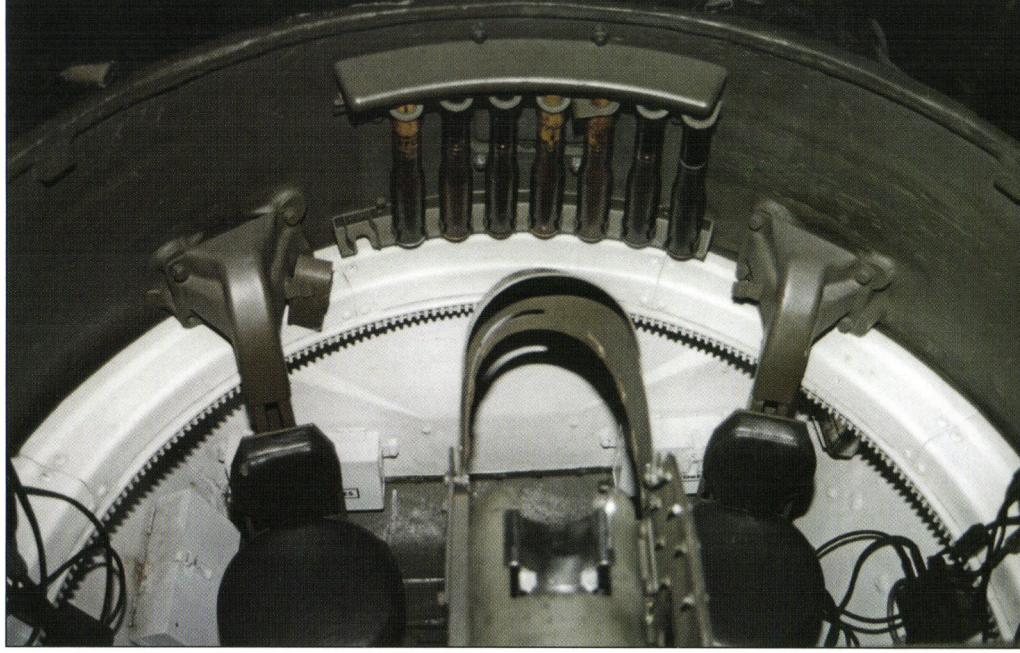




Seen from overhead, the gun recoil guard is positioned between the seats of the commander and gunner.

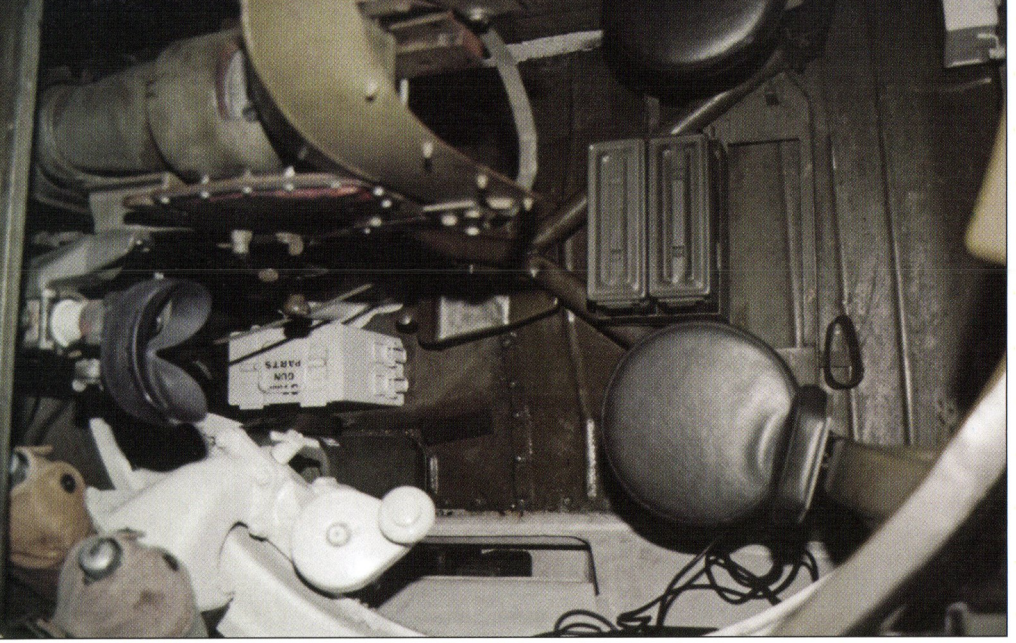


This view from the rear shows how the back of the recoil guard lifts up to allow for easier movement within the interior.



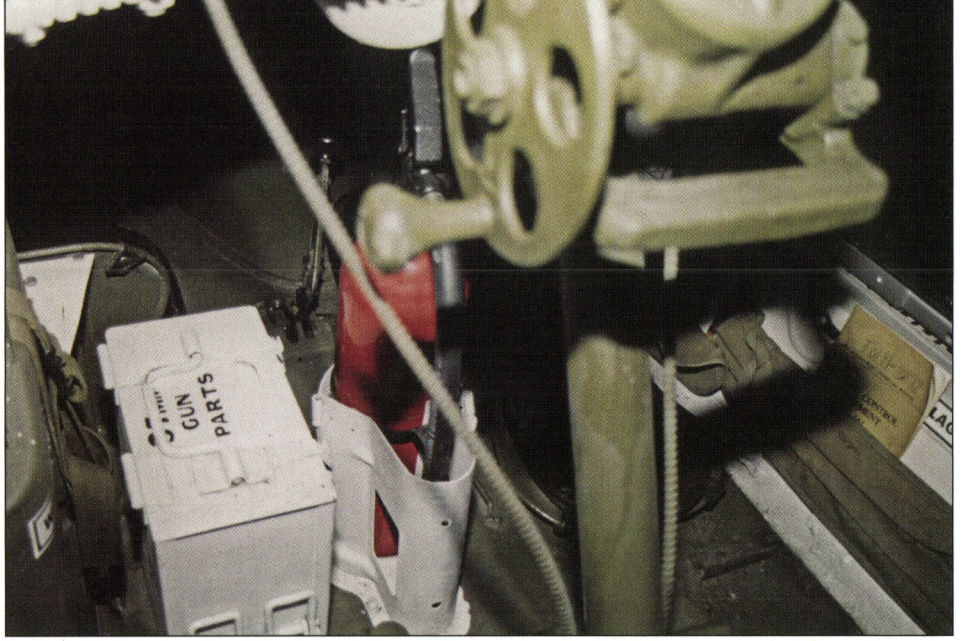
At the rear of the turret is a ready rack for ammunition. The 37mm canon can fire a variety of rounds, including armor piercing, high explosive, and canister. The seats are attached to the rear of the turret.

Both seats are attached to a "Y" frame that runs down from the seat support. On the right side of the turret is another ready ammunition rack. The bottom of the floor is painted olive drab to provide concealment from aircraft.



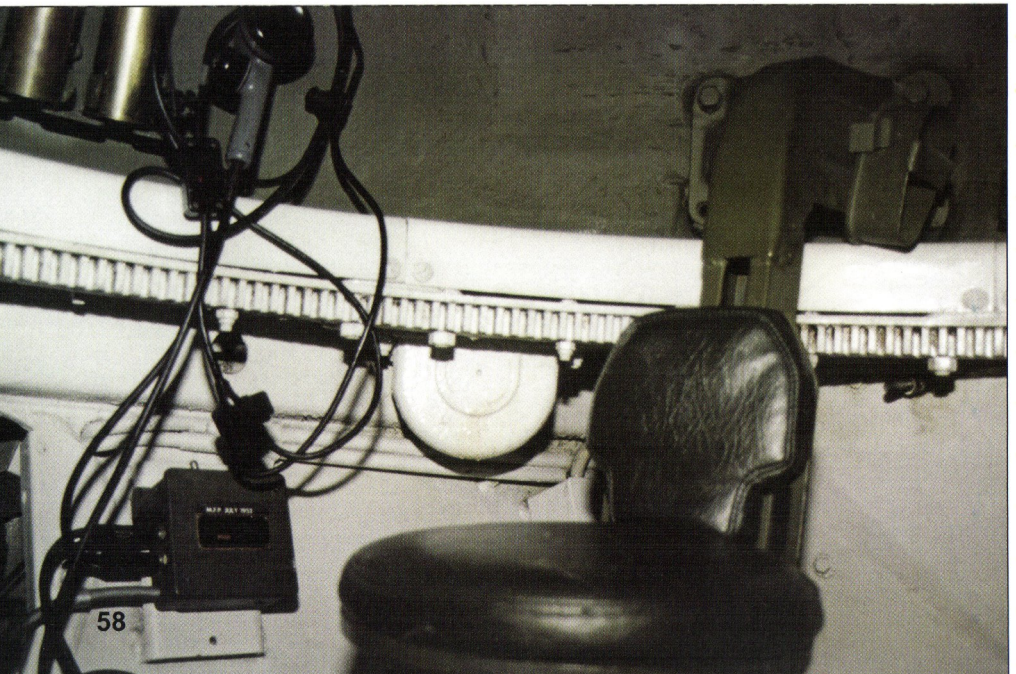
The gunner's seat is a mirror image of the commander's seat. Between the seats is a rack for .30-caliber ammunition containers. Directly ahead is the padded gun sight. To its left is the turret traverse mechanism.

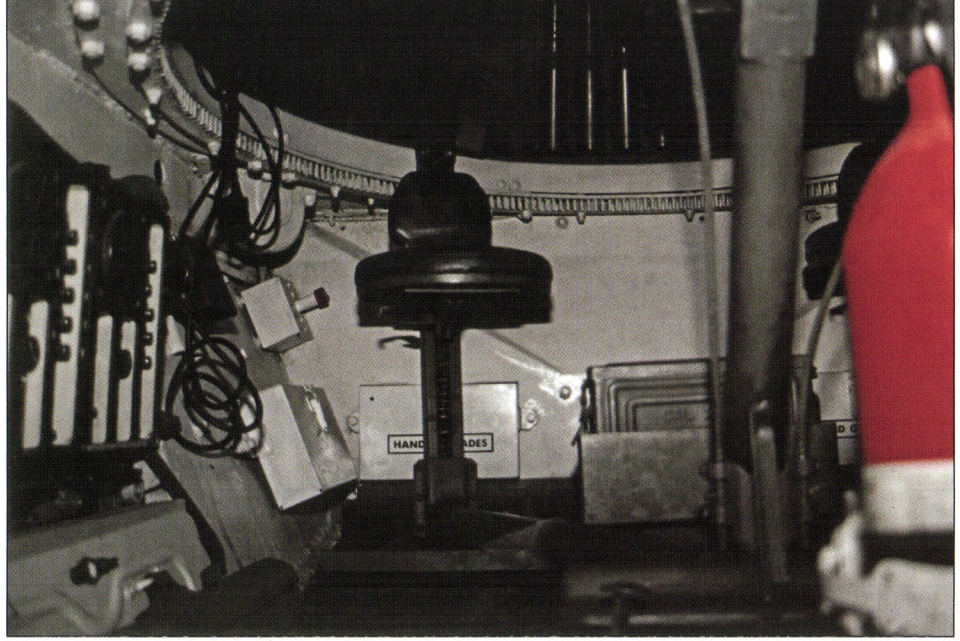
Both seats are adjustable and attached to the side of the turret so that both the gunner and commander rotate with the turret through 360 degrees. Next to the ready rack is the commander's intercom microphone.



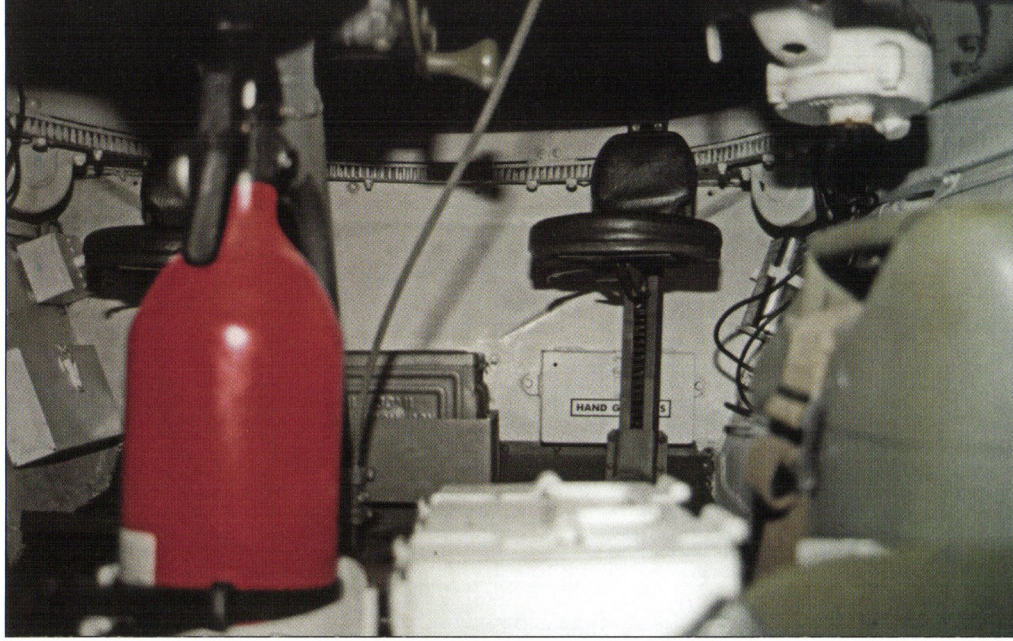
On the side of the gun mount is the manually operated elevating mechanism for the gunner. The cannon can be elevated to +20 degrees and depressed to -10 degrees.

Next to each seat on the side of the hull is the intercom box. By plugging into this the individual could talk with anyone in the crew. Internal communications inside American combat vehicles was extremely good. This helped the crew to function in a cohesive manner and work effectively as a combat team.





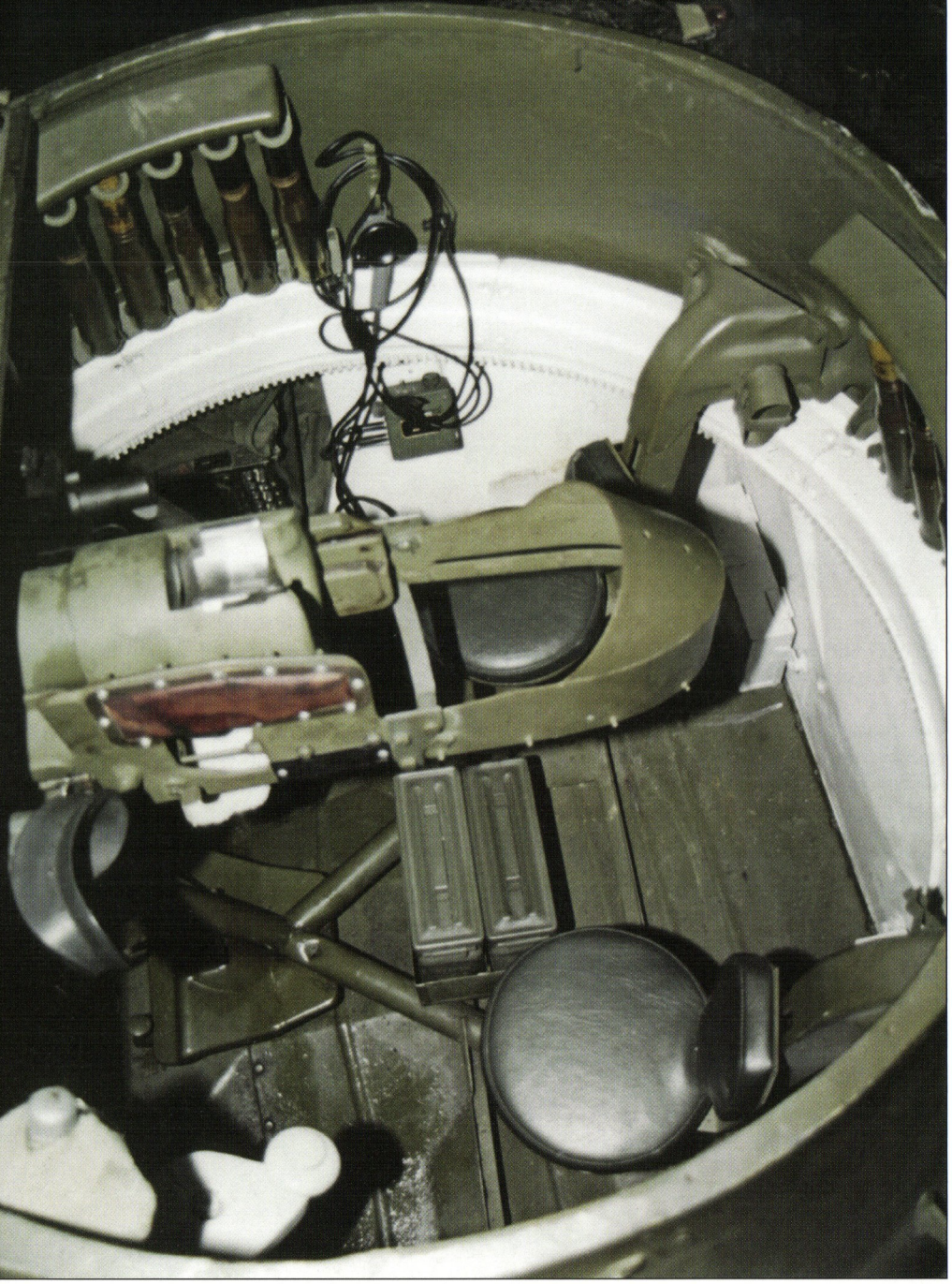
The seat adjusting mechanism can be seen on the support under the commander's seat in this view rearward from the assistant driver's position.



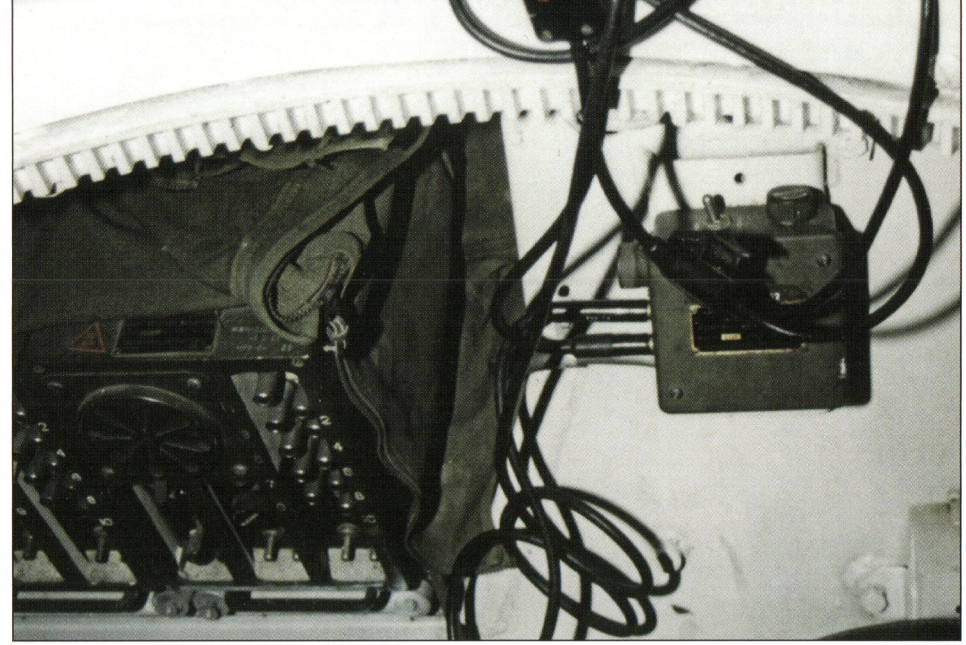
A similar photo taken from the driver's position, lookinb toward the gunner's seat. Vertical surfaces were painted white since there was little chance of their being seen from the outside the vehicle, in contrast to horizontal surfaces visible from overhead.

Along the side of the turret wall are fittings to hold equipment. Shown here next to the machine gun are brackets for a flashlight and holder for binoculars next to the ready ammunition rack. While new vehicles were often well marked for internal storage, the rigors of field conditions quickly wore down the markings, and the crews made little or no effort to keep them fresh.

The ready ammunition rack on the turret side holds eight rounds. The yellow tipped rounds are high explosive while the dark tipped ones are armor piercing. The intercom microphone for the commander is to the right of the rack. The contrast between the olive drab color on the turret side and the white lower hull is quite evident.



This overall view shows the "Y" brace that runs under the seats. A small foot pedal just below the sight on the "Y" allowed the gunner or commander to fire the cannon or machine gun by pressing the knob.



Using the intercom each member of the crew can communicate with his crewmates. The crewmen used the intra-car R.C.99 system. The hookup box can be seen under the turret ring to the right of the radio.

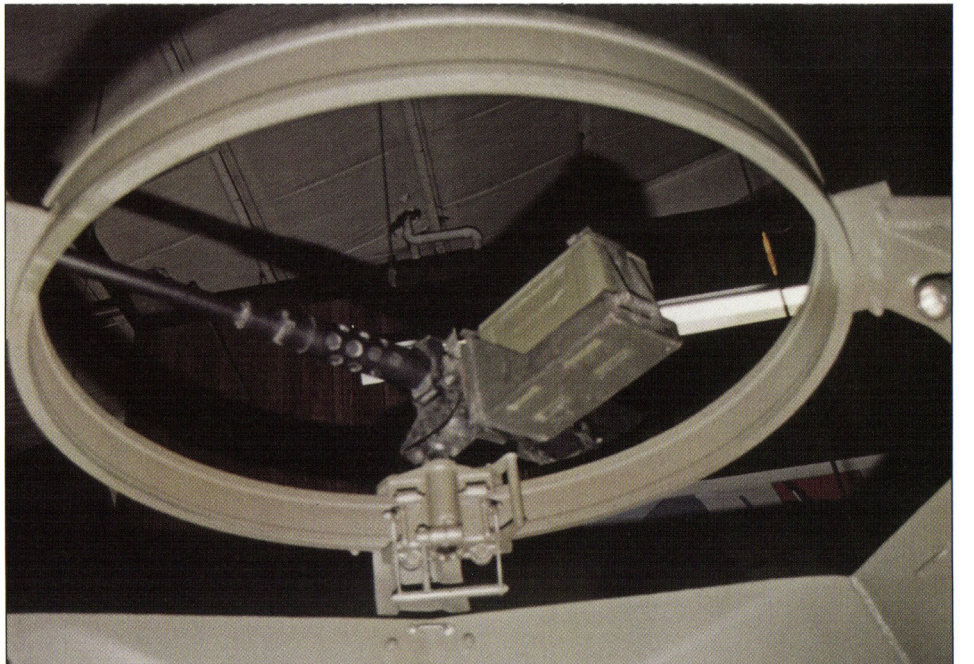
The ready rack at the rear holds an additional eight rounds of 37mm ammunition. Shells were pulled out by the bottom and slipped out of the ring at the top. To the right of the rack can be seen how the seat supports are bolted to the turret.

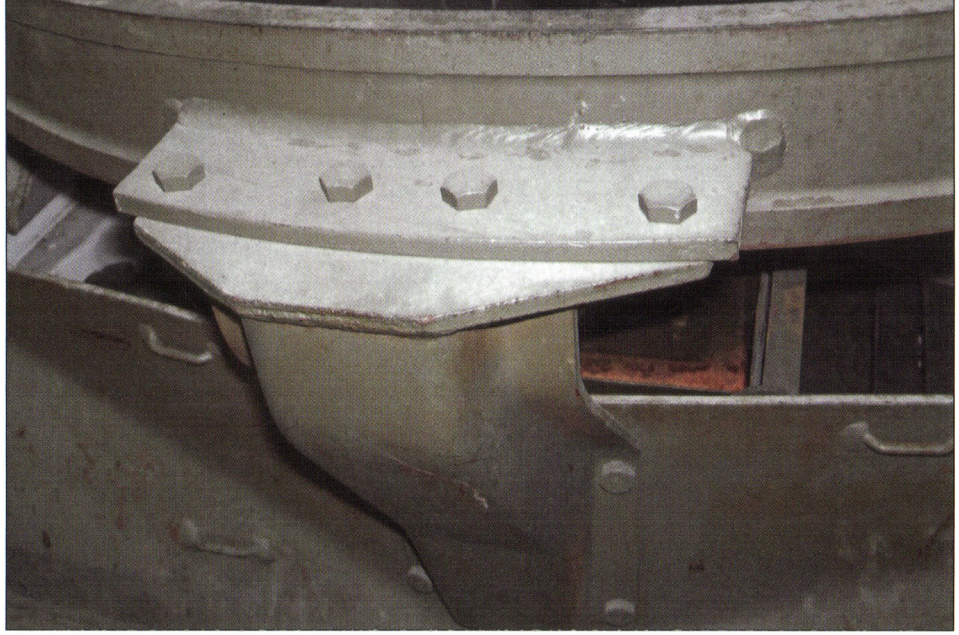
This wartime photo shows how the ammunition rack from the hull sponson was modified when it was replaced by an extra radio in cavalry units. A 43-round rack was placed under the new two-speed traverse mechanism on the left, while a 20-round bin was placed between the turret seats. On the turret ring are directional markings. (USA/PAM)

The supports are bolted onto the sides of the superstructure. Four bolts were used, two on each side of the support.

Instead of a turret, the M20 carried a ring-mounted .50-caliber machine gun. The machine-gun ring mount was attached by three supports to the sides of the parapet. The supports on the sides of the parapet extend over the compartment while the support on the rear of the parapet is slightly angled back over the engine deck.

An upward view shows how the brackets attach to the ring mount. The .50-caliber machine gun was relatively easy to swivel under most conditions.



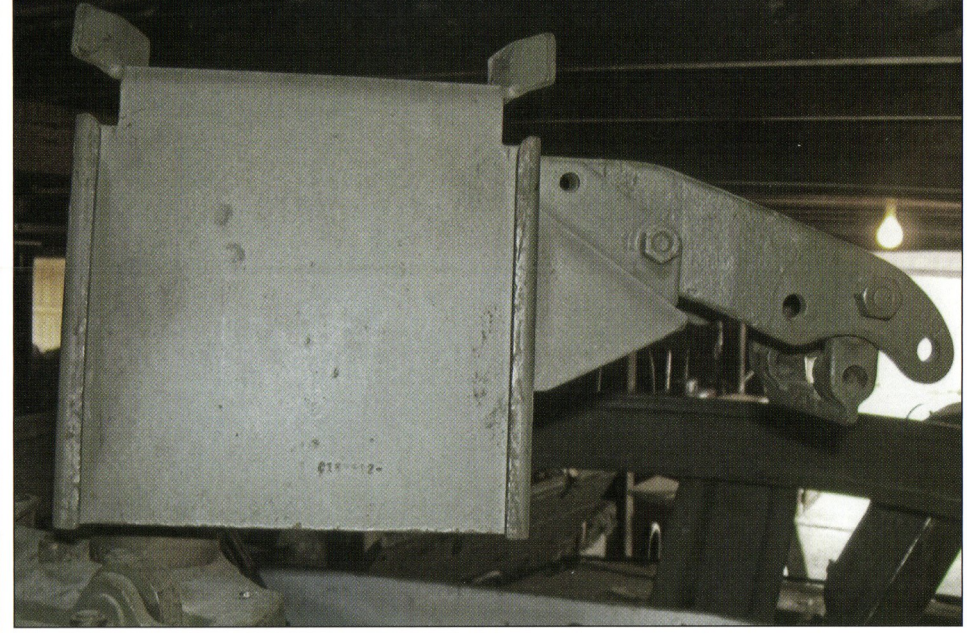


Three support brackets are welded onto the mount on the side and rear. There is no support bracket welded to the front of the ring mount.

The main armament of the M20 is the Browning .50-caliber heavy air-cooled machine gun. It can be used against either ground or aerial targets with devastating results.

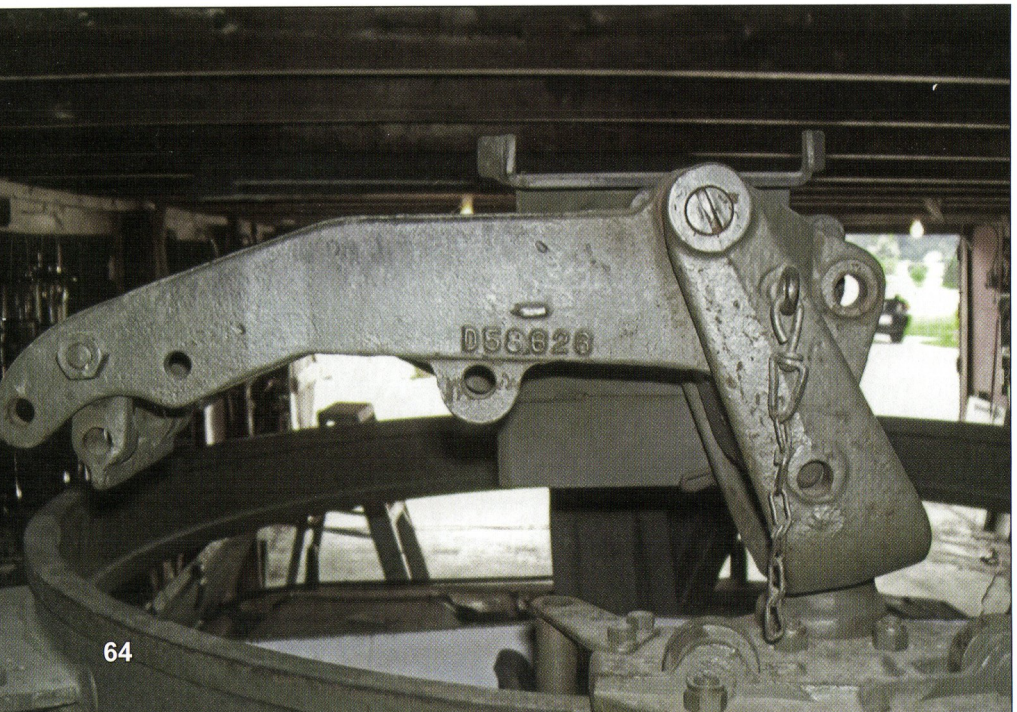
Each bracket is held in place on the supporting arm by four bolts.

The machine gun has a full 360-degree field of fire. The gun mount has a bracket to attach a tray to hold the ammunition can.

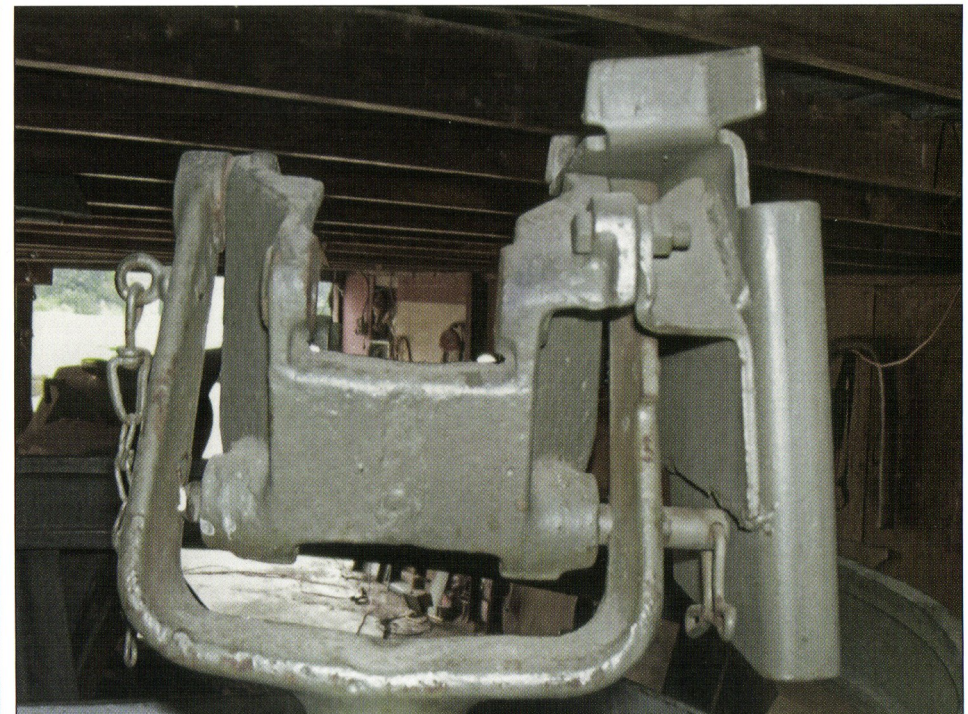


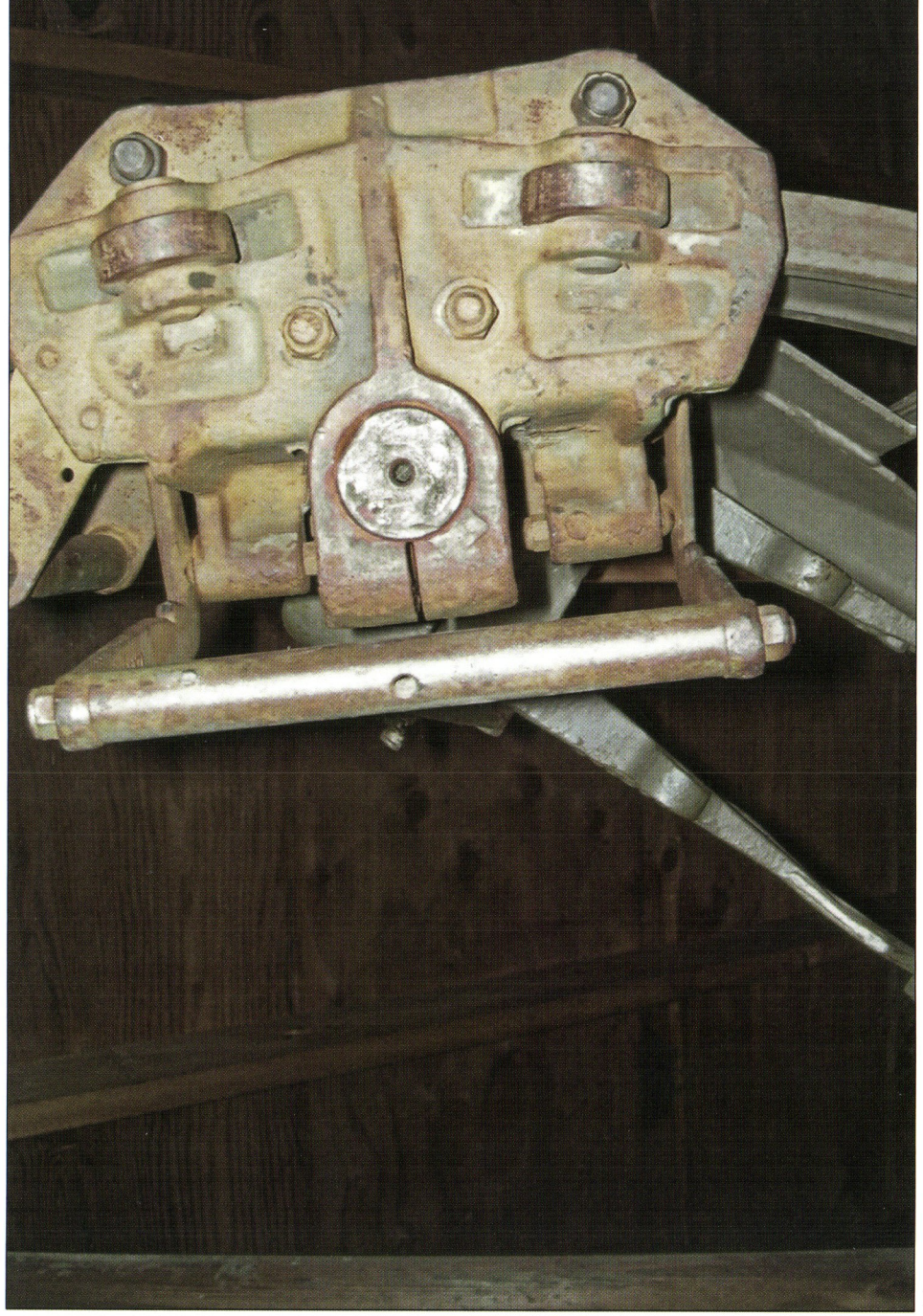
The side of the mount is viewed without the tray. The tray slips in the brackets at the top and slides down until it is fully seated.

The machine gun fits into a bracket that allows the gun to be both swiveled and elevated without moving it in the ring mount. The holes under the bracket allow the gun to be secured in the travel mode.



The machine gun bracket is fitted to a U-shaped mount attached to a large pintle. This assembly is fitted onto the roller mount, which allows the entire unit to traverse the full 360 degrees.

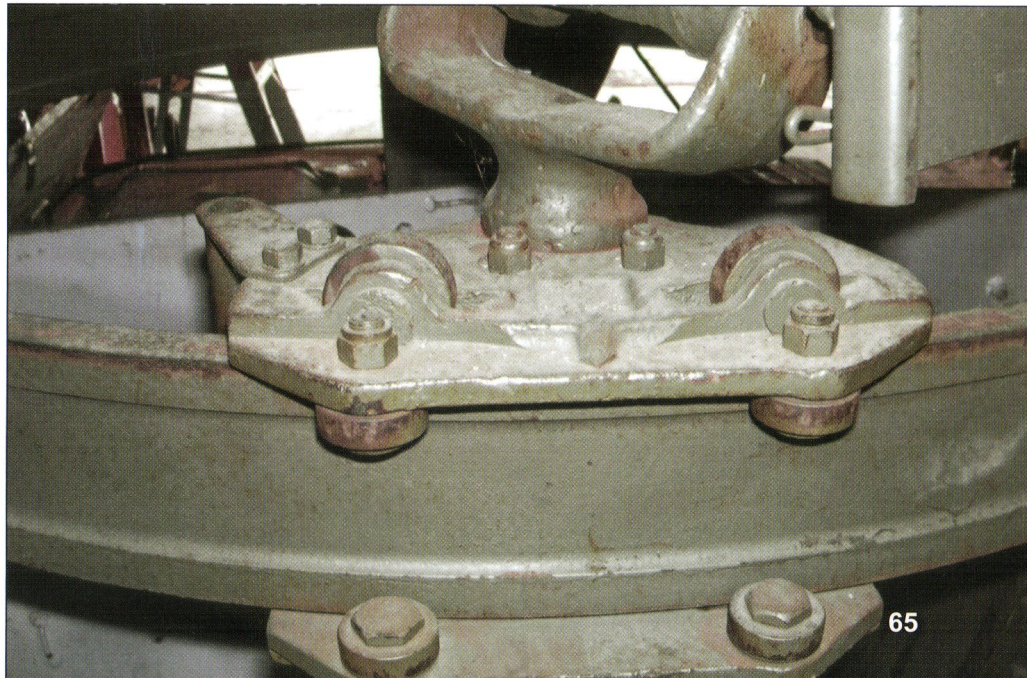


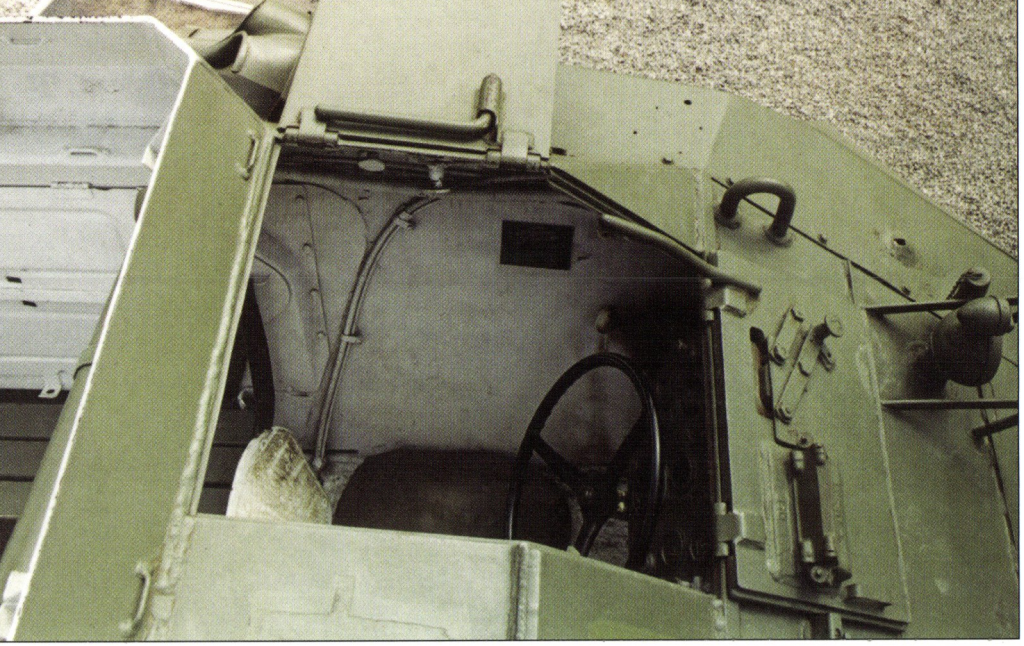


Rollers are also mounted underneath as can be seen in this view of the bottom. The locking handle is on the left while the large round pin next to it is the bottom of the machine gun bracket pintle.

The gun mount can be traversed by pulling on the machine gun in action or by the handles on the traverse mechanism. The square on the bottom of the traverse unit can be used to lock or unlock the unit in place by raising or lowering it.

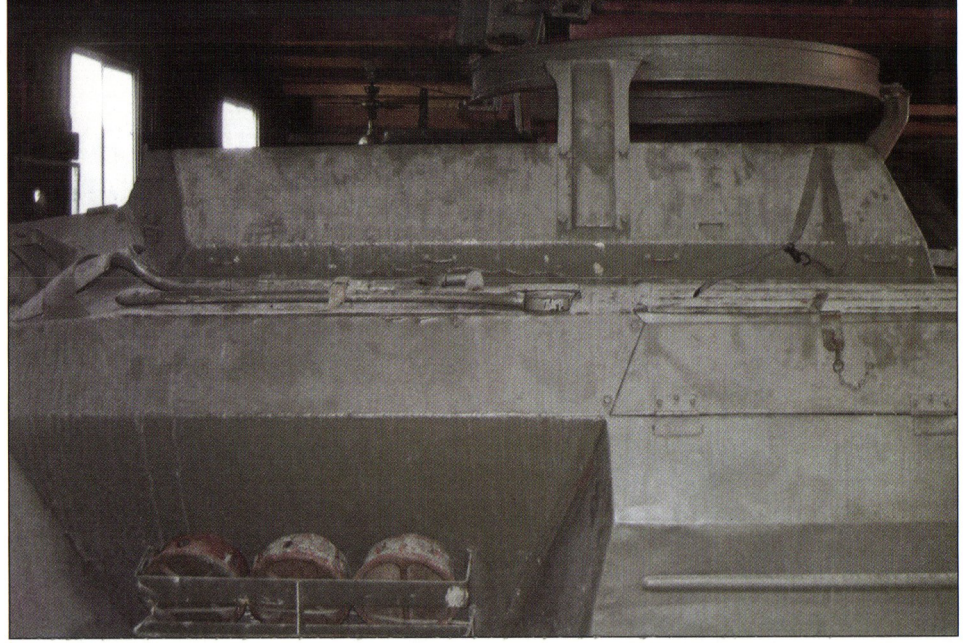
The traverse mechanism moves on rollers which can be seen on either end of the top of the unit and along the side. The entire unit moves fairly easily when properly lubricated.





The armored parapet is made of thin welded armor plate that provides only modest protection from small-arms fire and shrapnel. Numerous tie downs are located on its sides for external stowage. The M20 did not feature an indentation in the driver's roof as was found on the M8.

The front of the parapet is straight across, unlike the turret on the M8. The M8 had a small indentation to allow for the depression of the cannon. On the M20, which had no cannon, there was no need for this indentation.



In place of the 37mm turret on the M8, the M20 has a small parapet built up over the area that the turret would have covered. Atop this parapet would be an M49 or M66 ring mount for a .50-caliber machine gun.

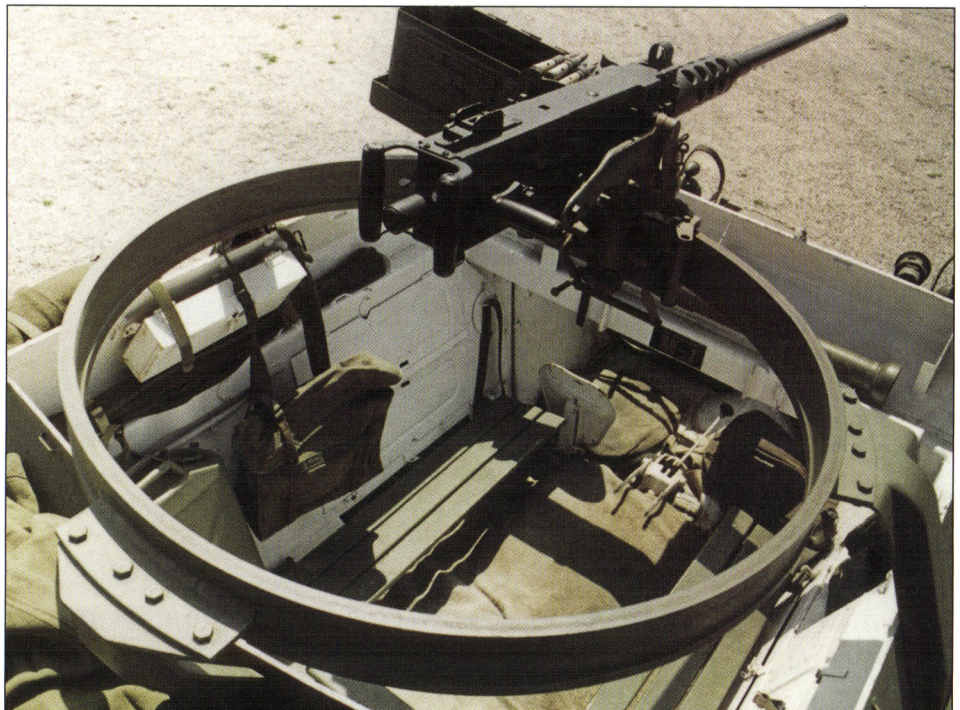
The parapet sides are slightly angled in order to enhance the protection provided by the thin armor. In reality, the parapet sides provided very little protection against anything but the lightest small fire and some shrapnel. The very prominent weld seam is where the armored plates come together.

The open M20 compartment is roomier than that in the M8. Wooden troop seats are located on each side of the compartment behind the driver's positions.

Located behind the troop seats on the right side of the hull is a sponson where equipment or a radio can be stored.

On the left side is another sponson. The doors on each sponson are different. The doors on the right open inward, while those on the left open outward. Mission requirements determined how each sponson was equipped.

At the rear is another, smaller troop seat. On the left is a rack for a jerry can. Normally on the right was a rack for three .30-caliber M1 carbines. Two more were carried on either side of the driver's compartment.



This view gives a good idea of the amount of space available in the compartment. Racks for crew weapons and a jerry can are on either side of the hull.

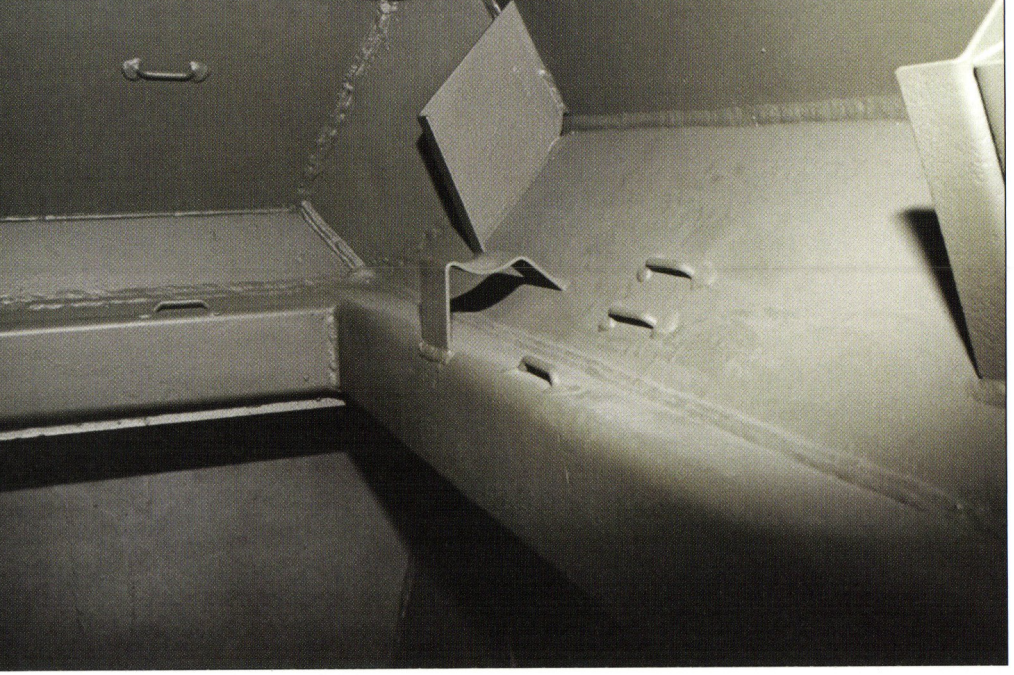
The jerry can sits in a small frame. Holding the can in place is a canvas strap running from tie downs on the side of the hull.

The jerry can rack and its small supporting arm underneath are seen from the side.

There are individual holders for the butt plates of three M1 carbines.

The clips are intended to hold the carbines in place. The barrels slipped into the clip and could be easily pulled out when needed.

A small extended plate with three clips secures the barrels of the carbines in place.

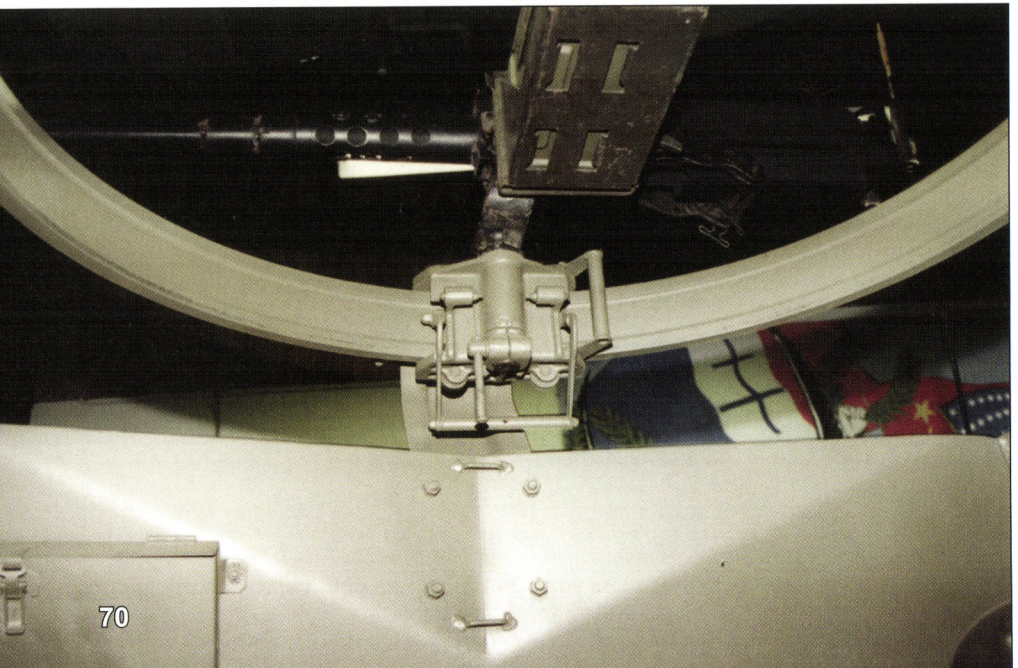


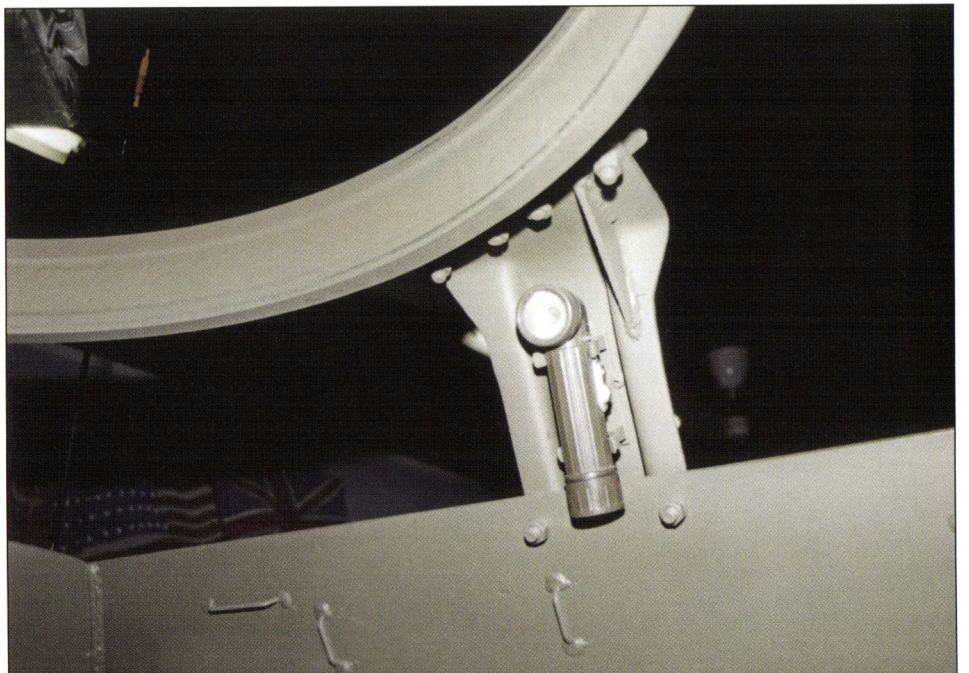
A small ledge runs along the side of the parapet. Brackets along the ledge allow specific types of equipment to be carried. This is the storage area for the 2.36 bazooka.

The rear parapet plate is not straight across as are the other three sides. It features an angular indentation outward from the interior for the mounting of the rear leg of the ring mount. The four attachment bolts are visible just below the top edge of the parapet.

Numerous tie downs along the sides and ledge allow the crew to secure equipment and ammunition. At the very top on the machine gun ring is a bracket that holds a flashlight in place.

A standard "L"-shaped flashlight is clipped on the bracket attached to the machine gun support. These flashlights could be fitted with blackout lens for use at night.

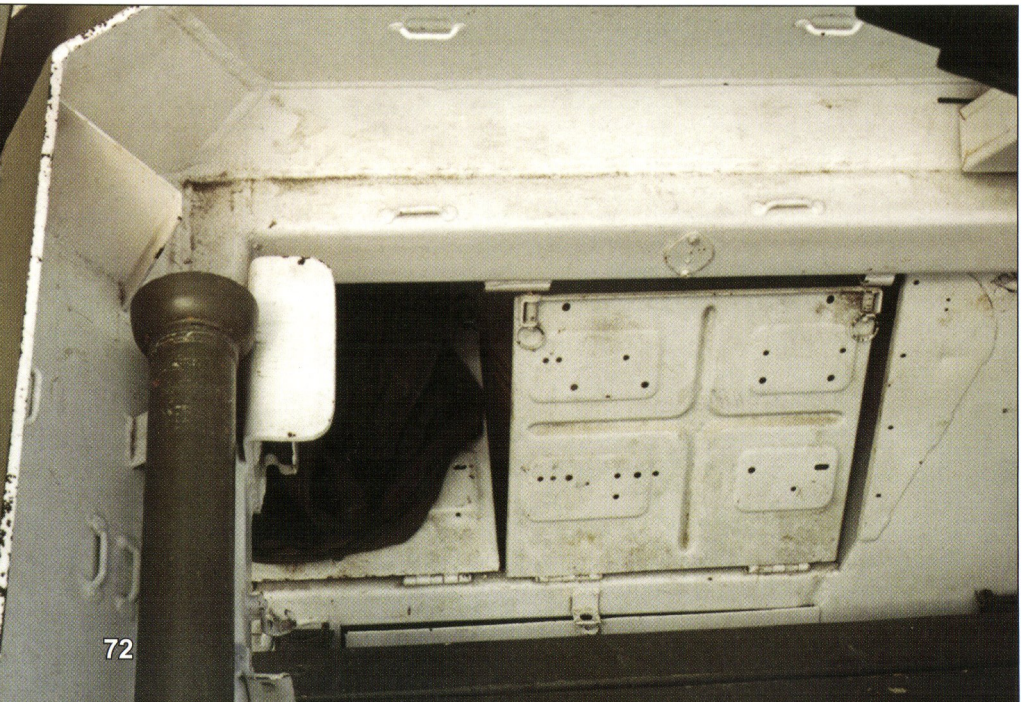




This M8 is covered in a rough whitewash winter camouflage during the winter of 1944-1945. Snow chains on the tires improve traction on the winter roads. Snow is packed in the wheel hubs. The front sheet metal fender has been removed either by the crew or due to battle damage. Without fenders, less mud and snow would accumulate around the wheels. Such buildup could impair steering. (U.S. Army)

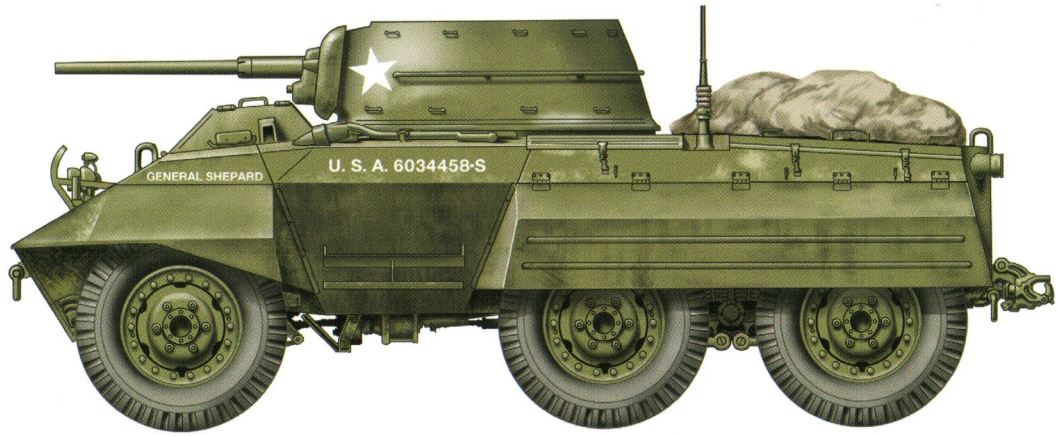
Normally the sides of interior of the hull are painted white. Anything visible from directly above, like the floor and hatch tops when open, were painted olive drab. A bazooka is stored on the front ledge.

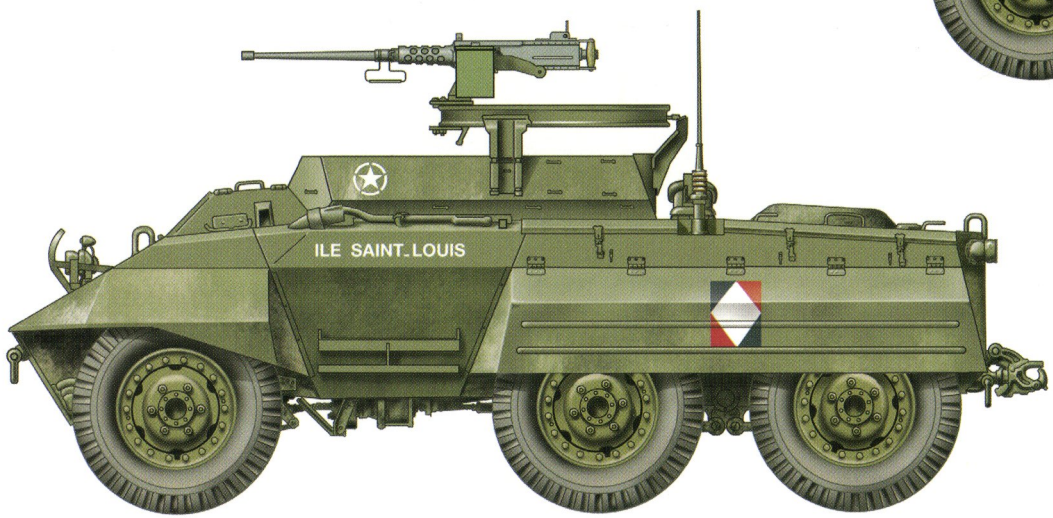
The end of the bazooka rests on supports on both ends of the front ledge. Brackets on the side also help support the weapon.



The bazooka spans almost the entire width of the compartment. A canvas strap helps secure it in place.

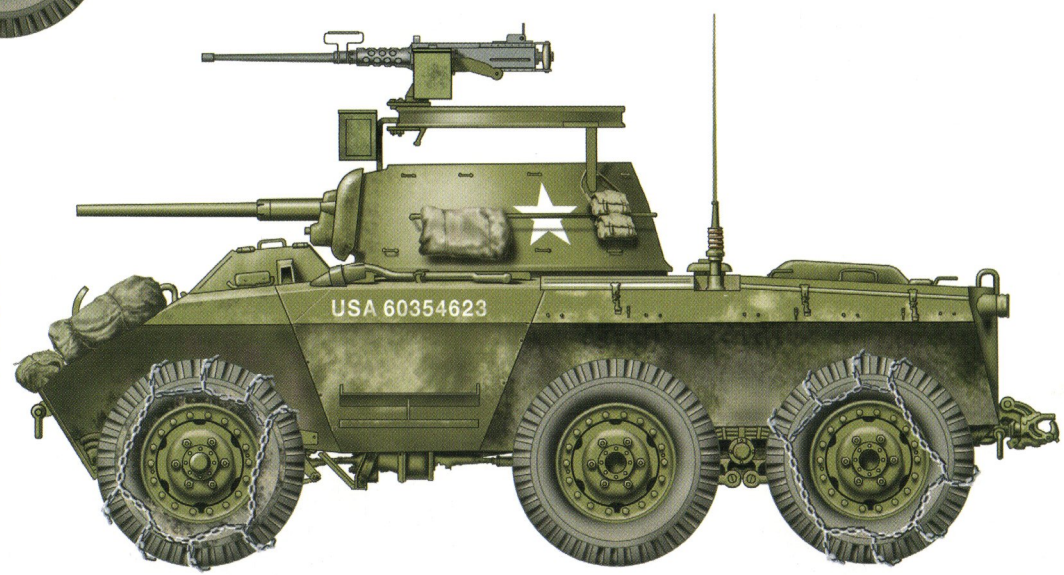
This M-8 served as the personal mount of Major General Lindsay Silvester during an impromptu victory parade in the French city of Chartres. Silvester commanded the 7th Armored Division, which landed on Utah and Omaha beaches in second week of August 1944. The unit was assigned to General George Patton's Third Army and immediately moved up to the front to capture the city of Chartres on August 18 following the "Operation Cobra" breakout.

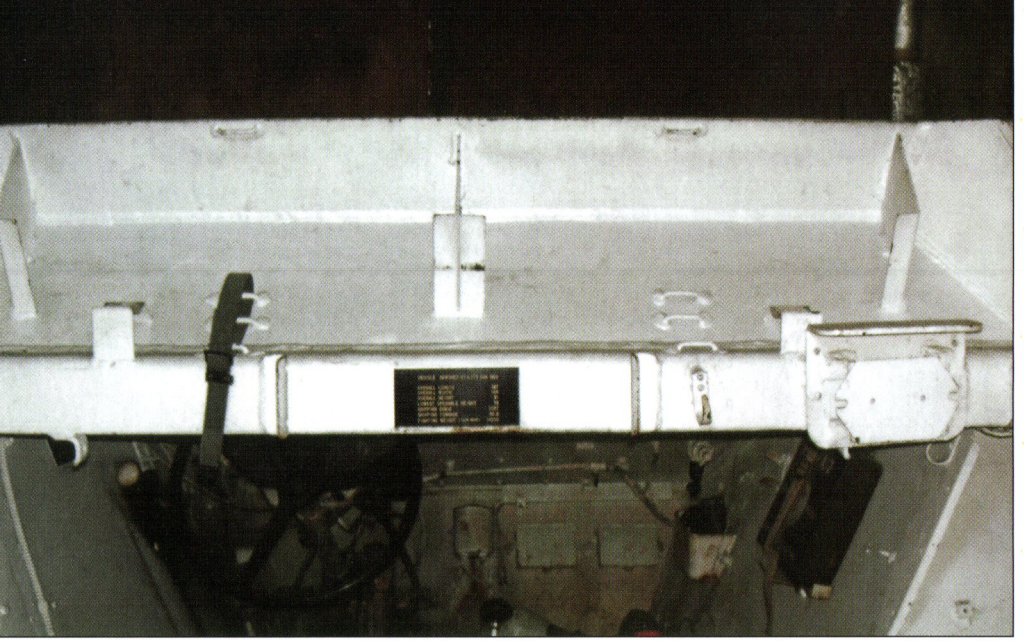




This M-20 was part of the French 1st Squadron, 2nd Dragoons in the summer of 1944. Equipped with M-10 Tank Destroyers, the unit participated in the liberation of France following the Allied breakout from Normandy. The vehicle and its crew took part in the welcoming of General Charles de Gaulle along with 2nd Corps commander, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny.

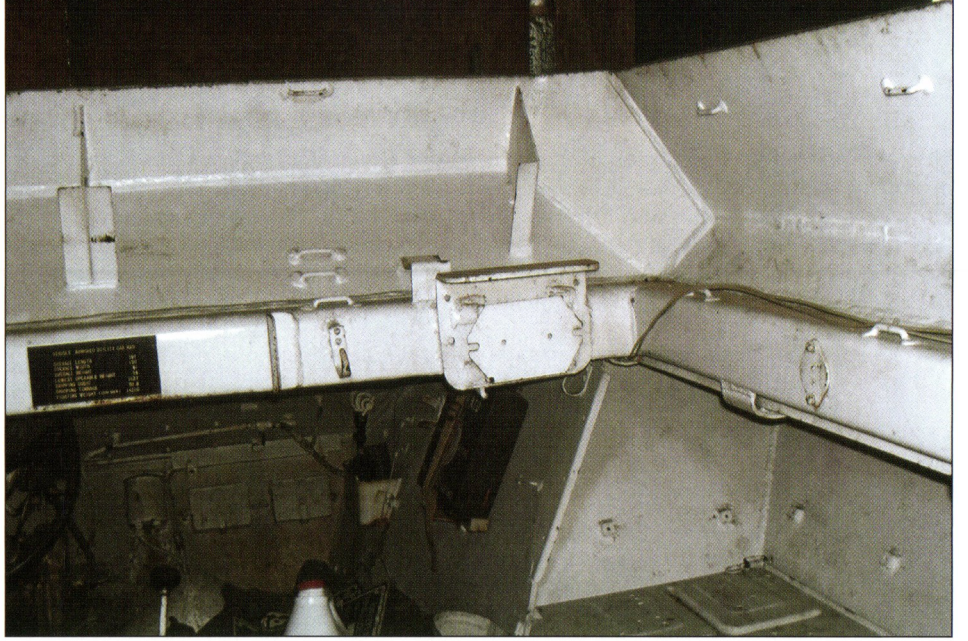
This M-8 belongs to the 92nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized. The squadron was assigned to the 12th Armored Division, which was committed to the fighting in December, 1944. The squadron led the drive on the Maginot Line toward Singling, Rohrbach-lès-Bitche, and Bettviller. The division held its position during the German attack in the Ardennes and moved into Germany to capture Utweiler, Germany, on December 21st.





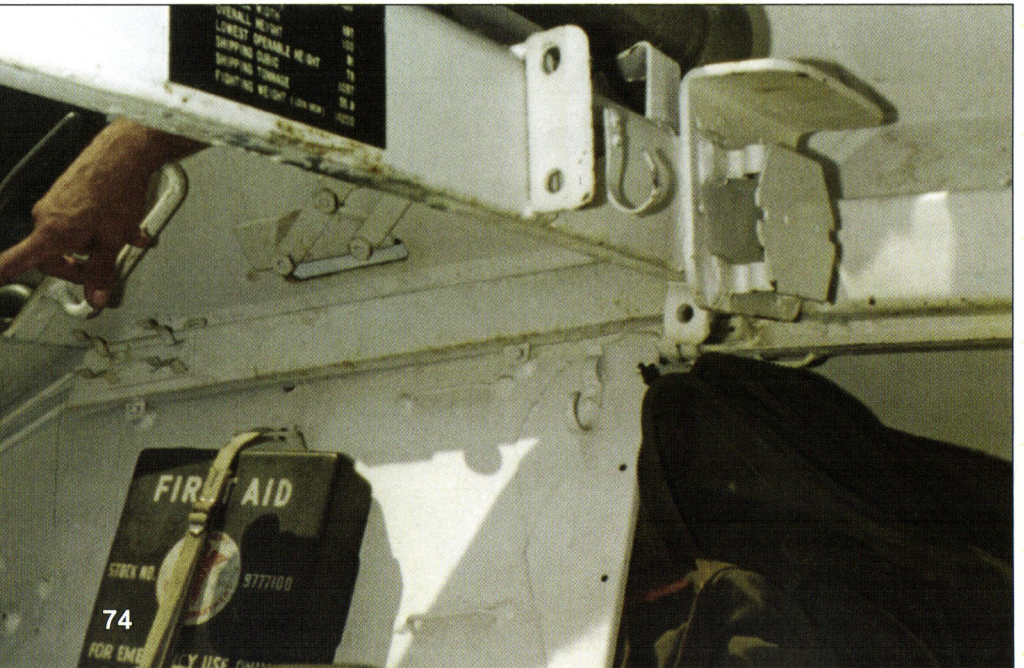
With the bazooka removed, the various brackets and tie downs can easily be seen. A data plate is on the side of the ledge in the middle.

The bazooka and support brackets are in the upper right of the photo. A first aid box is secured to the tie downs on the side of the hull next to the co-driver's position. Numerous tie downs on the hull sides allow the crew to secure equipment and keep it out of the way until needed, an important consideration under combat conditions.

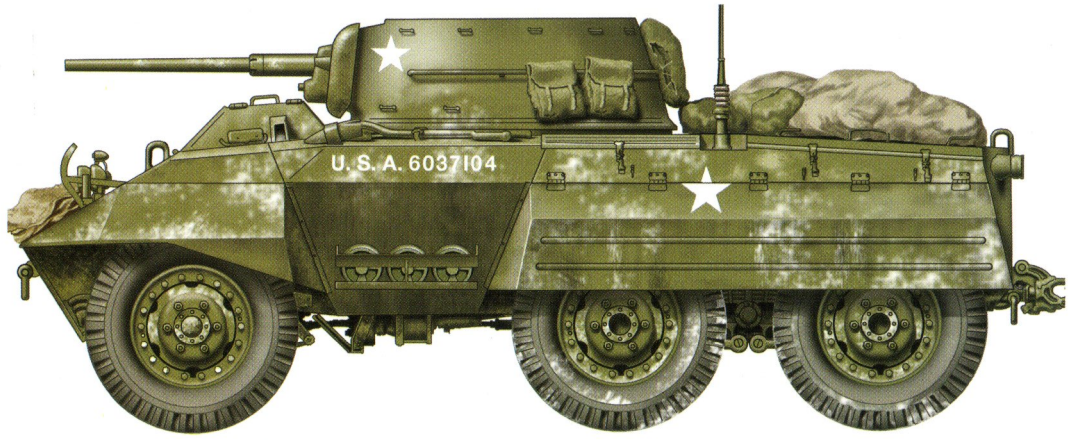


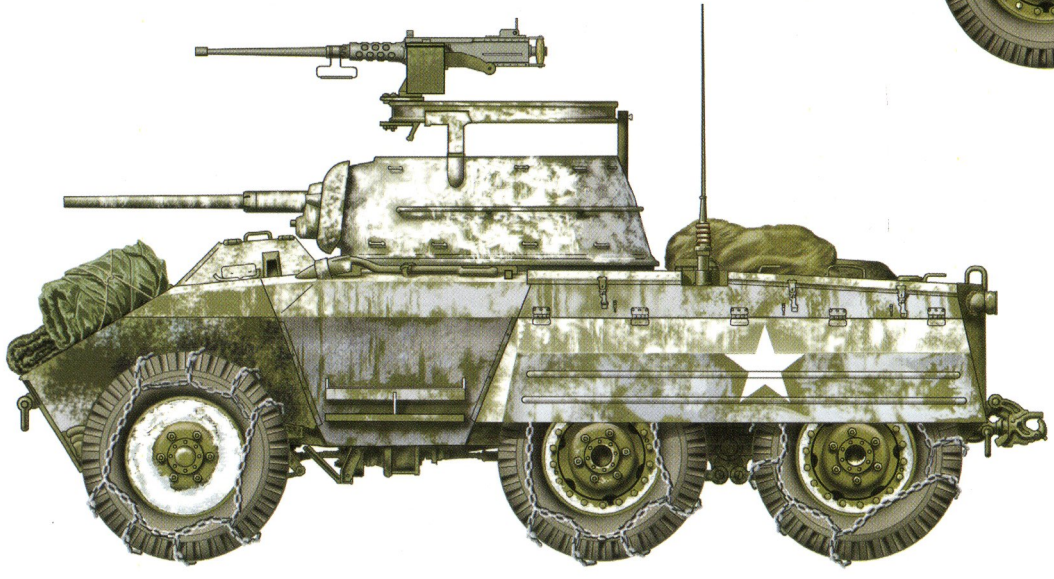
Each of the front corners is connected by a small angular shaped piece of plating due to the sloping of the parapet sides. This small slope slightly improves the protection offered by the parapet. The rear portion of the parapet is straight across since this plate has no incline.

This medical kit is the standard one found in all U.S. vehicles. It contains various types of bandages, morphine, disinfectants, and instructions on how to treat casualties.



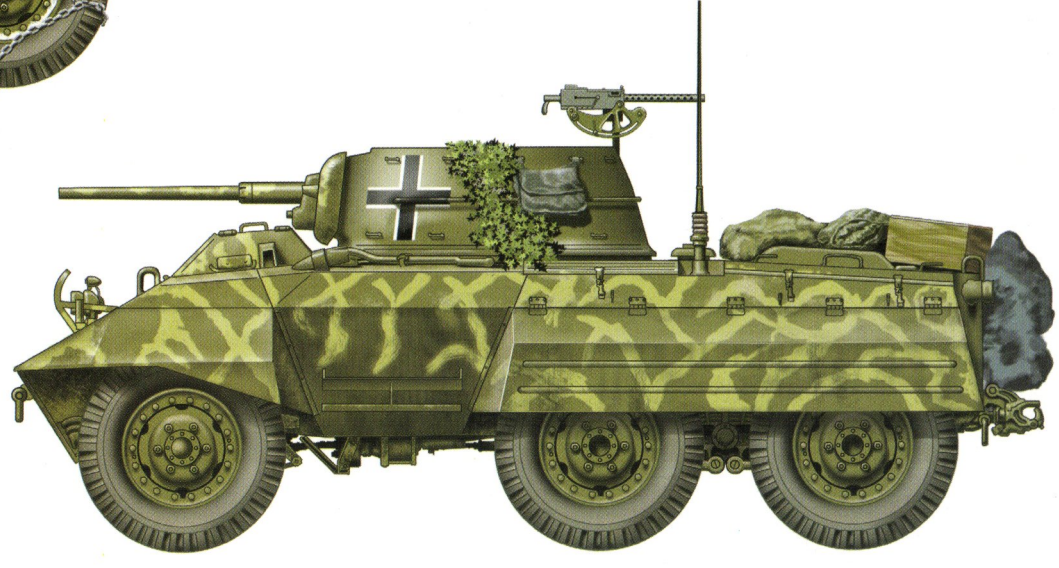
This M-8 belongs to C Troop, 18th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, 14th Cavalry Group. It was part of a column that was overrun by Kampfgruppe Hansen on 18 December 1944. The unit was on the road between Recht and Poteau in the Losheim Gap when the attack occurred. The Germans captured or destroyed six M-8 vehicles, three M5A1 light tanks, three M3A1 halftracks, and 12 jeeps.

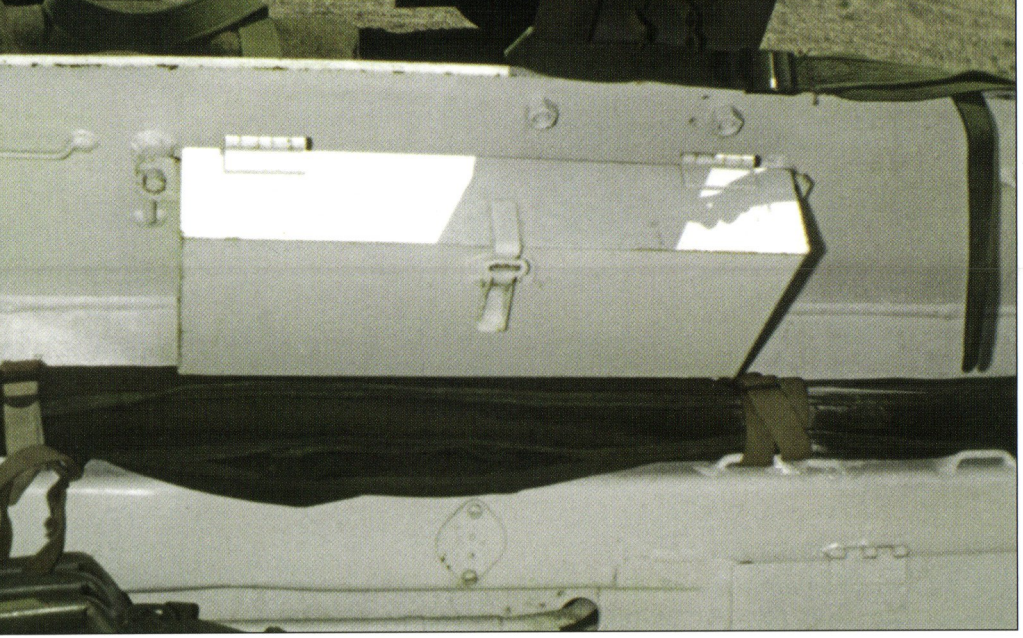




Equipped with snow chains, this M-8 is from the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, which was assigned to the 11th Armored Division. The division landed in France one day after the start of the German Ardennes Offensive and was immediately moved up to the front. The crew of this M-8 greeted men from the 84th Infantry Division on 16 January 1945, an event that marked the first linking up of the eastern and western shoulders of the "Bulge."

The Germans captured a number of M-8 vehicles since U.S. reconnaissance troops constantly ran out ahead of their main formations while looking for the enemy. The Germans were quick to repair or use any they acquired. These vehicles were often marked with oversized German insignias to prevent them from being hit by "friendly German fire." Normally they only lasted a short time in German service because of lack of spare parts and ammunition.





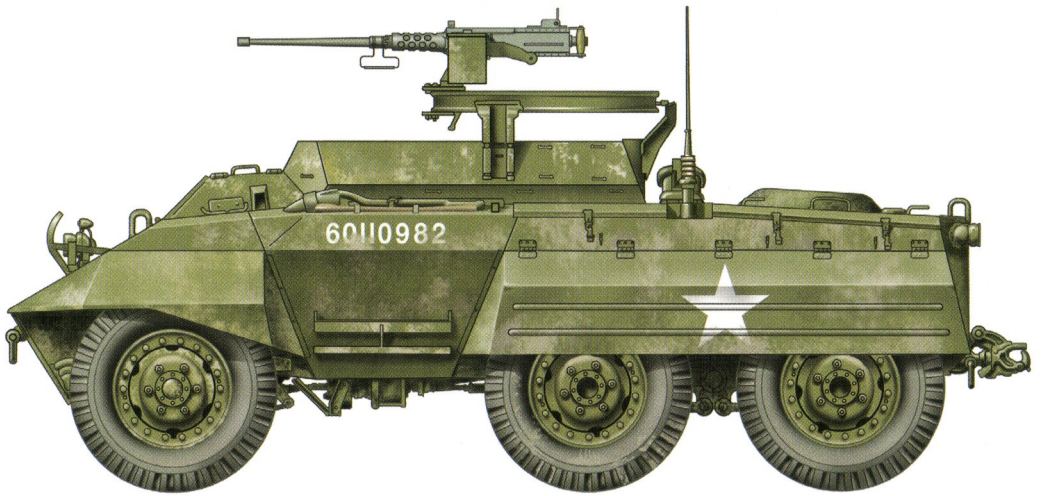
Storage boxes can be secured by various means along the side of the parapet walls. This box, used to hold grenades, has been secured to the tie downs.

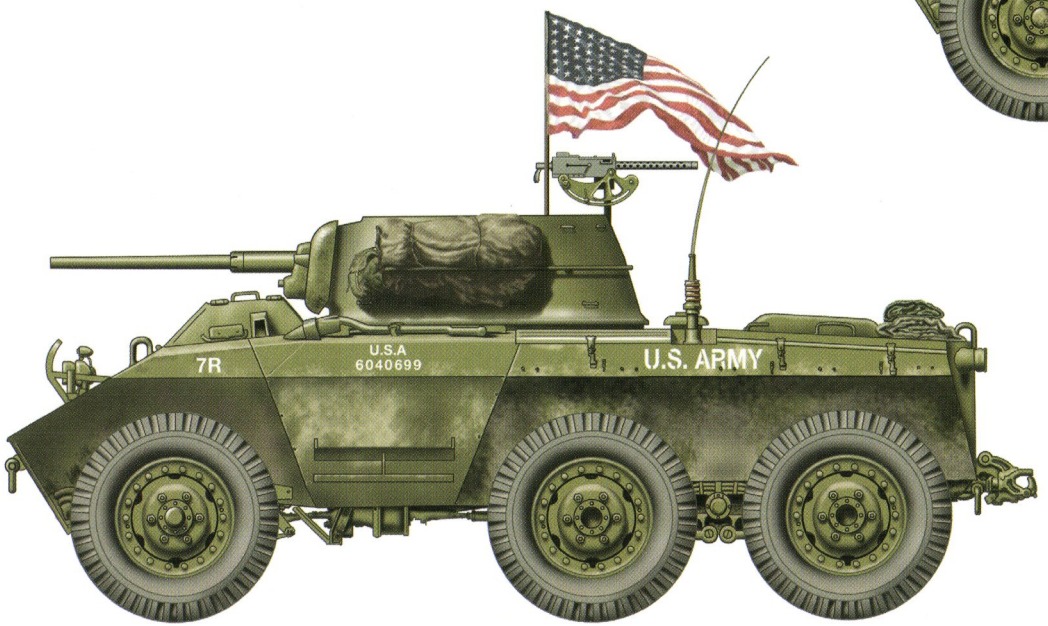
A simple clasp secures the top of the box. To open it, one lifts the clasp at the bottom and releases the latch holding the top down.

This flashlight clip is intended to hold a standard, Army "L"-shaped flashlight. The flashlight would simply clip into the brackets, pressure from which would hold it secure in place.

The box is divided into sections to hold the grenades. When not used for grenades a variety of other gear or munitions could be stored in the compartments. The bottom of the flashlight clip can be seen just above the lid.

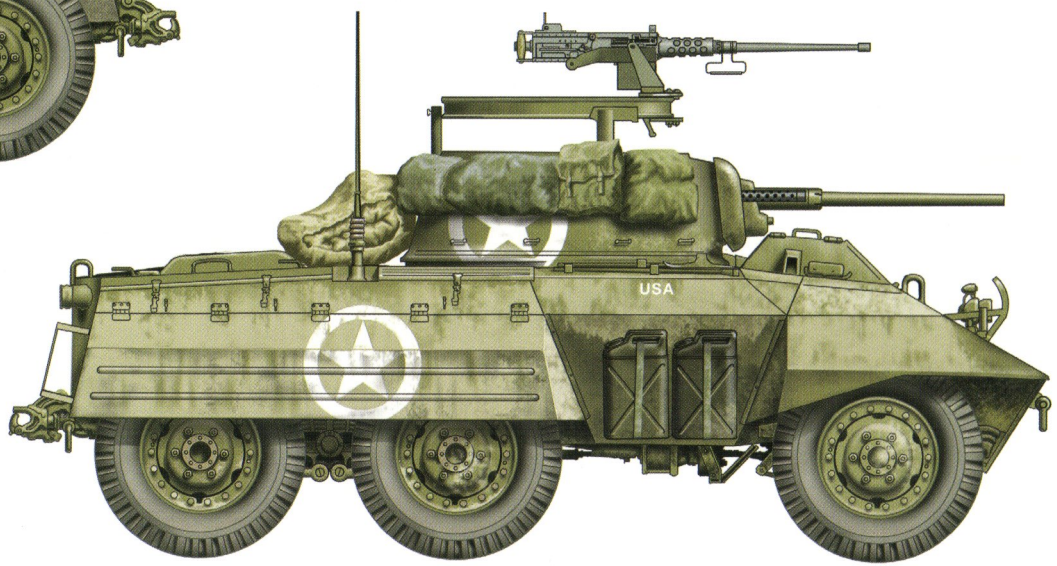
This M20 belongs to the 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion, which is attached to the 26th Infantry Division. Tank Destroyer battalions were often assigned to an infantry division on a semi-permanent basis. The M20 served in the headquarters section to maintain contact with units and provide some armored protection for personnel close to the front. The vehicles were used occasionally for scouting purposes.





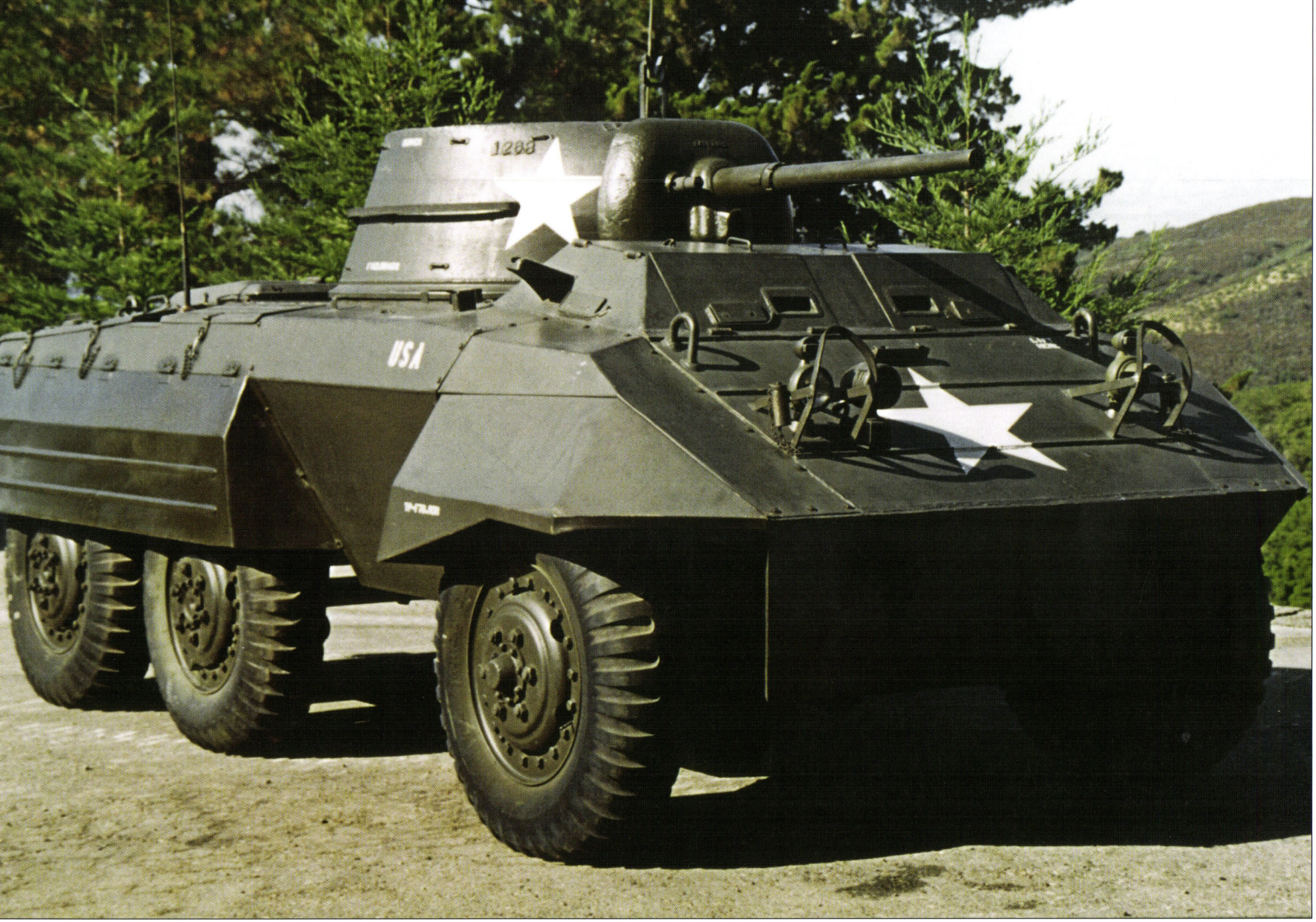
This M-8 is from the 7th Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized, of the 7th Infantry Division. Following the surrender of Japan, the division was sent to Korea to accept the surrender of Japanese forces there. This M-8 led a column that occupied Kyongsong, Korea, in September 1945. Eventually, after the withdrawal of American forces, the South Korean Army would receive the M-8s that would serve as their first armored vehicles.

This M-8 is from the 94th Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, of the 14th Armored Division. The squadron led the division as it drove into Germany in the spring of 1945. The reconnaissance unit participated in the liberation of numerous Allied POW camps. Troop C and E received Distinguished Unit Citations for their work in the reconnaissance role. The unit was also in the forefront in the liberation of forced labor and concentration camps, including sub divisions of Dachau.



Fast moving M8 vehicles were in the lead as American armored units advanced into Germany in the spring of 1945. The crew of this M8 view a statue of Friedrich I of Prussia in the town square of Moers in early March of that year. A large amount of chain is secured to the front of their M8 and a small light has been added to the left lift ring. (U.S. Army)

Following the end of the war M8s formed part of the constabulary force left behind to oversee the occupation of Germany. This M8 is from the 42nd Constabulary Squadron, 2nd Constabulary Regiment is on maneuvers near Grafenwöhr in May 1948. (U.S. Army)



The M8 would see service throughout World War II and, thereafter, in numerous armies and conflicts around the world. Today the vehicle is highly sought after by collectors because, unlike tracked vehicles, it can be operated on average streets. (Green)

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